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Security Council

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Letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter addressed to you by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States together with a compact disc (CD) containing all the decisions and documents (see annexes) adopted and issued by the eighteenth session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit level, held in Khartoum on 28 and 29 March 2006. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the Security Council in accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Yahya **Mahmassani**
Ambassador
Head of the New York Mission

Annex I to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

23 April 2006

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a compact disc (CD) containing all the decisions and documents adopted and issued by the eighteenth session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit level, held in Khartoum on 28 and 29 March 2006, namely:

- Decisions document and Khartoum Summit Declaration;
- Report of the Secretary-General on joint Arab action: achievements and challenges (2001-2006);
- Report of the Secretary-General on follow-up of the status of development and modernization in the Arab States (volumes 1 and 2);
- Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Iraq.

As you know, these documents contain a number of important decisions dealing with the most important Arab and regional political events, especially those pertaining to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the revival of the Arab peace initiative and the development of the situations in Iraq, Lebanon and the Sudan, in addition to a number of decisions relating to the political, economic and social spheres. I should be grateful if you would have them circulated as a document of the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to assure you of my desire for continued cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations and my appreciation of your sincere efforts towards achieving international peace and security.

(*Signed*) Amre **Moussa**
Secretary-General

Annex II to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

League of Arab States

LAS Secretariat General
LAS Council Division
LAS Council Affairs Directorate

The Council of the League of Arab States at Summit Level
18th Ordinary Session
Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan
28-29 March 2006

- Resolutions
- The Khartoum Declaration
- Address of His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, to the opening session
- Address of Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, to the opening session
- List of names of heads of delegations of Arab States participating in the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level

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Resolutions

The Council of the League of Arab States at Summit Level
18th Ordinary Session
Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan
28-29 March 2006

Reports to the Summit

Report of the Presidency on implementation of the resolutions of the 17th ordinary session of the Summit (Algiers, March 2005)

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having listened to the speech of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and President of the 17th ordinary session,

Having studied the report of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, to their Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, the Kings, Presidents and Emirs of the Arab States on follow-up to the implementation of the resolutions of the 17th ordinary session of the Conference (Algiers, March 2005), the final report of the Follow-up Committee for Implementation of Resolutions and Commitments and the memorandum of the Secretariat-General,

Recalling resolution 293 (23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session on the establishment of the Follow-up Committee for Implementation of Resolutions and Commitments,

And pursuant to the statutes of the Committee,

Resolves

To express gratitude to His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and President of the 17th ordinary session and to the Member States of the Follow-up Committee for the Implementation of Resolutions and Commitments and Secretary-General for the commendable efforts expended in following up the resolutions of the 17th ordinary session of the Summit (Algiers, March 2005).

(Summit resolution 18/326, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Report of the Secretary General on Joint Arab Action

- **Challenges and Achievements (2001-2006)**
- **Follow-up report on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States**

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the report of the Secretary-General on various aspects of Joint Arab Action and the second follow-up report on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States,

Resolves

1. To commend the report of the Secretary General on Joint Arab Action, the achievements realized during the years from 2001 to 2006, the measures taken to implement Summit resolutions and to call upon him to continue his efforts in this regard;

2. To take note of the contents of the second follow-up report on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States, express gratitude to the Secretary-General and submit periodic reports on this matter to the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/327, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Appointment of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the letter of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt nominating Mr. Amre Moussa as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States for a second term,

Taking into consideration the endorsement of Mr. Amre Moussa's candidacy by His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen, on behalf of the Arab bloc,

And pursuant to the provisions of article 12 of the Charter of the League of Arab States and article 2 of the Annex on regular convening of the Council at summit level,

Resolves

1. To appoint Mr. Amre Moussa as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States for a period of five years with effect from the end of his first mandate;

2. To extend gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his sound direction of Joint Arab Action and to commend his achievements in the development and modernization of the League's systems, reform of its practices, enhancement of its working methods, revitalization of its role in Arab societies and highlighting its presence at regional and international levels;

3. To request the Secretary-General to continue the plan for development and modernization of the Joint Arab Action system, giving prominence to the Arab stances and policies in the international arena.

(Summit resolution 18/328, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Arab Consultative Summit

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Pursuant to the principles and goals of the Charter of the League of Arab States,

Guided by the mechanism for the regular convening of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, Striving to develop and modernize the methods and mechanisms of Joint Arab Action,

Pursuant to the consultations of His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, with Arab leaders,

Resolves

To commission the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level to study the proposal to hold an Arab consultative summit between the two ordinary sessions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level to examine recent issues, coordinate the higher positions and policies of the Arab States and submit a report on this matter to the next ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/329, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Development of the Joint Arab Action system
Substantive and procedural issues pertaining to the voting system

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and resolution 6600 (29 December 2005) of the extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level,

Pursuant to resolutions 290 and 291 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session,

Resolves

1. To include matters relating to the following among the substantive issues that require to be decided by two-thirds of the votes of Member States participating in the voting:

(a) Political and security issues, including:

   i. Matters relating to the maintenance of Arab peace and security;

   ii. The sovereignty, security and unity of Member States;

   iii. Arab national security strategies and measures;

   iv. Measures for resisting aggression against an Arab Member State of the League of Arab States, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 2, article 6 of the Charter, requiring unanimity;

   v. The settlement of Arab disputes with due regard to the provisions of paragraph 4, article 5 of the Charter, requiring a simple majority in relation to arbitration and mediation decisions;

   vi. Higher Arab political strategy;

   vii. Economic integration among Arab states;

   viii. Resolutions on the boycott of Arab or foreign states.

(b) Institutional and structural issues, including those relating to the following:

- i. Amendment of the Charter or addition of an annex thereto;
- ii. The establishment of new institutions within the framework of the League of Arab States;
- iii. The acceptance of new members into the League of Arab States;
- iv. The termination or suspension of the membership of a Member State of the League of Arab States, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 2, article 18 of the Charter, requiring unanimity in the event of termination;
- v. The appointment of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and approval of assistant secretaries-general;
- vi. Matters pertaining to the budget, with due regard to the provisions of article 16 of the Charter requiring approval of the budget by simple majority.

(c) Issues the Council resolves to be substantive by a majority of two-thirds of the votes of Member States participating in the voting.

2. Issues other than those stated in operative paragraphs (a, b, c), above, shall be deemed to require decision by simple majority of the votes of Member States participating in the voting.

3. This resolution shall be considered part of the statutes of the League of Arab States.

(Summit resolution 18/330, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Statutes of the Arab Peace and Security Council

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and resolution 6479 (13 January 2005) of the extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level on development of the Joint Arab Action system,

Taking into consideration the provisions of articles 5, 6, and 8 of the Charter of the League of Arab States, article 52 of the Charter of the United Nations and articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation among the States of the League of Arab States,

Recalling resolution 294 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Affirming the importance of maintaining the peace and regional security of the States of the League of Arab States and peace and stability of the Arab region as a whole, strengthening relations between the States of the League of Arab States and settling such disputes that may arise between them by peaceful means,

Conscious of the need to establish an Arab Peace and Security Council as a specialized body within the framework of the Joint Arab Action system,

Resolves

1. To establish the Arab Peace and Security Council, the annexed statutes of which shall supersede the provisions of the mechanism of the League of Arab States to prevent, manage and settle disputes;

2. To call upon the Arab States to complete swiftly the measures to ratify the statutes in accordance with their constitutional systems.

(Summit resolution 18/331, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Annex

Statutes of the Arab Peace and Security Council

Article 1

The following terms in these Statutes shall be defined as follows:

The Charter: the Charter of the League of Arab States

The League: the League of Arab States

The Council of the League: the Council of the League of Arab States

The Statutes: the statutes pertaining to establishment of the Arab Peace and Security Council of the League of Arab States

The Council: the Arab Peace and Security Council of the League of Arab States

The Member States: the Member States of the League of Arab States

The Secretary-General: the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

The Secretariat-General: the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States.

Article 2

The Arab Peace and Security Council shall be established under the auspices of the Council of the League and shall supersede the mechanism of the League of Arab States to prevent, manage and settle disputes.

Article 3

The Council shall aim to:

(a) Prevent disputes arising between Arab States and manage and settle them should they occur;

(b) Monitor, study and submit recommendations to the Council of the League on developments affecting Arab national security.

Article 4

(a) The Council shall be composed of five representatives of Member States at the level of Minister for Foreign Affairs, in the following manner:

1. The state holding the Presidency of the Council of the League, at ministerial level;

2. The two States holding the Presidency of the two previous sessions of the Council of the League, at ministerial level;

3. The two states assuming the presidency of the next two sessions of the Council of the League, at ministerial level.

(b) The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the state holding the presidency of the ordinary session of the Council of the League, at ministerial level, shall preside over the Council.

(c) The Council shall meet at the level of Minister for Foreign Affairs; it may also meet at delegate level.

(d) The Secretary-General shall participate in the meetings of the Council.

(e) The Council may invite agencies, experts or whomever it sees fit to attend its meetings, as required.

Article 5

1. If the President of the Council or one or more of its members is a party to the dispute, the following procedures shall be followed:

- The Presidency of the Council shall be assumed by the President of the subsequent session;
- The member or members party to the dispute shall be replaced in the current Council session by the forthcoming President or Presidents for the next two sessions.

2. Each state party to the dispute shall be invited to attend the meetings of the Council to present its point of view. The Council may request the help of any Member State to assist it in the performance of its duties, as required in each case.

3. The Council shall meet bi-annually at ministerial level, prior to the meetings of the Council of the League or when required at the request of one of the Member States of the League, the President of the Council or Secretary-General.

Article 6

In accordance with the Charter of the League of Arab States and principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Member States, the Council shall assume the following duties:

1. Draft strategies for the maintenance of Arab peace and security;
2. With due regard to the provisions of article 6 of the Charter, the Council shall propose appropriate collective measures in the face of any aggression or threatened aggression against an Arab State and, similarly, if any Arab State undertakes or threatens aggression against another Arab state;
3. Strengthen Arab preventive action capacity by developing early warning systems and making diplomatic efforts, including arbitration, mediation and conciliation to clear the air and remove the causes of tension in order to avoid future conflicts;
4. Strengthen cooperation in confronting cross-border threats and dangers, such as organized crime and terrorism;

5. Support efforts to bring about peace and reconstruction in the post-conflict phase in order to prevent its recurrence;

6. Propose the establishment of an Arab peace-keeping force when required;

7. Facilitate humanitarian efforts and participate in alleviating the effects of disasters, conflicts and crises;

8. Coordinate and cooperate with international and regional organizations to strengthen peace, security and stability in the Arab world and settle disputes between any Arab State and another state;

9. In the event of a conflict worsening the Council may, in addition to making recommendations for ensuring its cessation, request the Council of the League to convene an extraordinary session to take the necessary resolutions in respect thereof;

10. At its first or extraordinary session, as circumstances require, the Council shall submit to the Council of the League a report to include proposals defining the measures necessary to maintain Arab peace and security and separate the conflicting parties, as well as all the issues set forth and the results of negotiations, good efforts, mediation and conciliation between the conflicting parties.

Article 7

The Council shall have the following systems:

(a) Database

The Secretary-General shall create a database within the framework of the Secretariat-General's existing resources to collate information supplied by Member States and international and regional organizations and bodies with the goal of enabling the Council to assess situations and carry out its duties in the best manner.

(b) Early warning system

The Secretary-General shall set up an early warning system with the help of a team of experts on the Secretariat-General staff to ensure the systematic analysis of available data and information, monitor conflict-causing factors and submit reports on the basis thereof to the Council, accompanied by a thorough evaluation of the possibilities of conflict, with a view to taking the necessary preventive measures.

(c) Committee of wise men

The Council shall form a committee of wise men to include prominent Arab personalities enjoying respect and esteem. The President of the Council and Secretary-General shall select a member of the committee to be charged with mediation, conciliation or good efforts between the two or more parties to the dispute. The Statutes shall determine the method of selecting the committee of experts.

When required, the President of the Council may, in coordination with the Secretary-General and at the request of and with the approval of the state concerned, mandate one or more members of this committee to proceed to zones of conflict to observe and asses the situation and submit proposals and recommendations to facilitate the work of the Council in all circumstances.

Article 8

(a) The Council of the League shall determine the issues in which the Council shall be authorized to take resolutions and other issues in respect of which the Council shall make recommendations to the Council of the League for resolution.

(b) The Council of the League may mandate the Council to take the measures necessary to stabilize security in areas of tension, such as dispatching missions of civilian or military monitors to conflict zones with specific tasks.

Article 9

The Council shall establish an internal system to regulate its operational procedures and form committees; the Council of the League at ministerial level shall issue a resolution to this effect. The Council shall consider its recommendations in accordance with the voting mechanism stipulated in the Charter.

Article 10

(a) Under the supervision of the Council, the Secretary-General shall take the measures and initiatives necessary to ensure implementation of the Council's recommendations designed to prevent, manage and settle disputes.

(b) The Council shall be funded from the budget of the Secretariat-General.

Article 11

The Secretariat-General shall assume the work of the Technical Secretariat of the Council.

Article 12

Pursuant to a mandate from the Council of the League at ministerial level, the Secretary-General shall inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the Security Council of the United Nations of the measures taken by the Council.

Article 13[1]

These Statutes shall be considered approved upon signature and shall be submitted to Member States for ratification and accession thereto in accordance with their constitutional systems.

Article 14

These Statutes may be amended by agreement of two-thirds of the States Party thereto. Such amendment shall come into force one month after deposit of the instruments of ratification by one third of the States Party thereto.

Article 15

These Statutes shall come into force fifteen days after the date the instruments of ratification of seven States are deposited with the Secretariat-General. With regard to other States, it shall come into force one month after the date their instruments of ratification or accession are deposited.

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[1] These Statutes were signed by all Member States at the closing session of the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Khartoum, 29 March 2006).

Development of the work of the specialized Arab organizations and ministerial councils

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the report of the Secretariat-General on implementation of resolution 279 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session, the reports of the legislative committees of the competent Arab organizations on the evaluation of these organizations and their development plans, and the proposals of the Economic and Social Council,

Affirming the important role of the specialized Arab organizations in the progress of Joint Arab Action, their commitment to the agreements establishing them and to their statutes, the need to develop performance and energize their role in the light of recent developments on the Arab and international scene and to focus upon the fundamental issues of concern to Member States,

Reaffirming its call to Member States that have not paid their contributions and arrears to undertake to do so in accordance with their budget commitments,

Calling upon Arab States to ensure Arab organizations make use of experienced firms to implement regional and pan-Arab projects,

Reaffirming, likewise, the role of the Social and Economic Council as the pan-Arab authority for Joint Arab Action institutions in planning and monitoring the affairs of the specialized Arab organizations and Arab ministerial councils,

Resolves

1.1. To charge the specialized Arab organizations with drawing up development plans, within detailed executive programmes, to include the following:

- Updating of their missions and the goals they seek to achieve in accordance with recent developments on the Arab and international scene;
- Establishment of quantifiable executive programmes in accordance with a specific timetable;
- Use of clear criteria to measure their performance and the continuous assessment of such performance;
- Concentration of expenditure upon activities and programmes;
- Best use of available resources and the endeavour to develop these resources;
- Development of their organizational structures and operating procedures, including
  - Modernization of systems and operating procedures
  - Development of manpower
  - Development of work groups
  - Development of their electronic infrastructure and conversion to digital.

1.2. That the specialized Arab organizations present the executive programmes and timetables for development plans to the Social and Economic Council on a regular basis.

2. To commission the Social and Economic Council to study the reports drafted by the Arab ministerial councils, of whose technical secretariats the Secretariat-General shall assume the duties, and submit proposals thereon to the next session at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/332, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Interim Arab Parliament

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and the Statutes of the Interim Arab Parliament,

Pursuant to resolution 292 (23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session,

Resolves

1. To welcome the convening of the first ordinary session and proceedings of the Interim Arab Parliament and affirm its support in carrying out the tasks it is charged with;

2. To affirm that the Interim Arab Parliament shall have an independent budget whose sources shall, in the interim phase, consist of equal contributions from Member States, in addition to other resources to be determined;

3. To approve allocation of an immediate and temporary administrative budget for the Interim Arab Parliament from now until 31 December 2006 of US$1,813,000, to be paid equally by Member States;

4. To request the Secretary-General to submit periodic reports on the activity and work of the Interim Arab Parliament to the Council of the League at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/333, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Ongoing consideration of the ideas presented by Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi to the Summit (Amman, 2001)

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and the recommendations of the ministerial committee charged with studying the subject,

Reaffirming resolution 297 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session,

Resolves

I. On the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict:

1. To charge the Secretariat-General with referring the initiative presented by Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi on the establishment of a democratic

state on the land of historic Palestine to the Palestinian Authority, as the body directly concerned with the subject, to define its stance thereon;

2. In the event of agreement by the Palestinian side to the initiative, the Arab States shall consider submitting it to the organizations of the international community as an Arab initiative;

3. To affirm the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland;

4. The need to work toward the removal of Israeli weapons of mass destruction.

II. On the issue of the Arab-African space:

To charge the ministerial committee concerned with studying the ideas of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi to hold the necessary consultations with the African Union in order to familiarize it with the initiative and reach agreement on the proper mechanism to achieve this goal.

III. On the phenomenon of international terrorism:

1. To reject the accusation of terrorism against the religion of Islam;

2. The need to deal with the causes of terrorism and remove the factors instrumental in its spread, including the elimination of focal points of tension, injustice and double standards in applying international law and the violation of the rights of peoples:

3. To uphold the charters and agreements signed within the framework of the League of Arab States and in support of those signed within the framework of the African Union and Organization of the Islamic Conference on combating terrorism;

4. To call for an international conference to establish a precise definition of terrorism, determine ways of confronting it internationally and avoid confusion between terrorism and the legitimate right of peoples to resist occupation.

IV. On reform of the United Nations and affiliated organizations:

1. To reaffirm resolution 307 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session on reform of the United Nations Organization in support of the ideas proposed by Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi on this issue;

2. To coordinate with the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the non-aligned countries to adopt a united position toward reform of the United Nations and its institutions.

V. The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya undertakes to pay the financial costs necessary to implement the activities associated with this resolution.

(Summit resolution 18/334, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Political Issues

The Palestinian issue and developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict

Activation of the Arab Peace Initiative

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and the final report of the Follow-up Committee for the Implementation of Resolutions and Commitments,

Recalling the resolution of the extraordinary Arab Summit conference (Cairo, June 1996) that a just and comprehensive peace is the strategic choice of the Arab States, to be achieved under international law and requiring a reciprocal commitment to be affirmed by Israel,

Affirming resolution 221 (Beirut, 28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, adopting the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for a lasting, comprehensive, just and peaceful solution in the region,

Referring to previous Arab Summit resolutions in this regard, in particular resolution 298 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having reviewed the international efforts to revive the peace process,

Pursuant to the outcome of the meeting (25 March 2006) of the ministerial committee concerned with the Arab Peace Initiative,

Resolves

1. To reaffirm that the peace process is an indivisible process and that a just and comprehensive peace in the region can only be achieved by complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, to the line of 4 June 1967 and the lands still under occupation in southern Lebanon, and by reaching a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees agreed in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), the rejection of all forms of resettlement, the acceptance by Israel of the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative resolved at the Beirut conference whereupon, the conference affirmed, the Arab States shall consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to have ended and establish normal relations with Israel within the framework of a comprehensive peace;

2. To call upon the Quartet to resume serious efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the terms of reference of the peace process represented by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the principles of land for peace and impermissibility of seizing the territories of others by force, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map;

3. To confirm the Arab position rejecting partial solutions and unilateral Israeli measures, considering them designed to seize more occupied Palestinian land, prevent the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state, undermine Arab and international efforts within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative to bring about a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and threaten security and stability in the region;

4. To request all states and international organizations not to recognize partial solutions and unilateral Israeli measures or treat with any guarantees or promises that result in the diminution of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people or reward the Israeli occupation, which seeks to impose partial, unilateral solutions through its insistence upon continuing to expand the settlements and build the wall on occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem and surrounding area, in violation of the rules of international law and the foundations and tenets of the peace process;

5. To charge the Arab ministerial committee on the peace initiative to maintain contacts with the Quartet and international parties concerned with the peace process to mobilize support for this initiative and issue a resolution of the United Nations Security Council or General Assembly to be adopted as a framework for the desired peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(Summit resolution 18/335, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Developments in the Palestinian issue

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

In the light of continued Israeli refusal to comply with legitimate international resolutions, its persistent violation of the rules of international law and international humanitarian law, its escalation of aggression against the Palestinian people, intensification of settlement activity, continued construction of the racist wall of expansion and implementation of plans for the Judaization of Jerusalem,

Affirming its solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for its struggle to regain its inalienable, legitimate rights,

Affirming its previous resolutions in this respect,

Taking into consideration political developments since the last summit,

Referring to the statement of the Interim Arab Parliament at its session at the Secretariat-General on 16 and 17 March 2006, on the assault of the Israeli army on Jericho prison,

Resolves

1. That a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is only achievable by complete Israeli withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967, the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip with its capital in East Jerusalem and by reaching a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, agreed in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), and achieving security for the refugees;

2. That this peace must be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties on the basis of the agreed tenets and foundations of the peace process namely, the resolutions of international law, the principles of land for peace and impermissibility of acquiring land by force, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map;

3. To reject partial solutions and the unilateral measures that Israel is taking or intends to take in Palestinian land occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem, by which it seeks to pre-empt the outcome of negotiations on final settlement issues and to draw the border unilaterally in accordance with its expansionist ambitions, making it impossible to establish a sovereign, independent Palestinian state;

4. To condemn vigorously Israeli plans to seize the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas and the eastern slopes of the West Bank heights and divide the remaining lands into three isolated cantons to prevent any possibility of establishing an independent and contiguous Palestinian state;

5. To call upon the international Quartet to shoulder its responsibilities in working to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map and to confirm that any measure by any party must be within the context of the implementation of both;

6. To commend the Palestinian legislative elections which reaffirm the capability of the Palestinian people and its fitness to determine to own destiny and establish an independent state on national soil with its capital in East Jerusalem, and to call upon the international community to respect the democratic choice of the Palestinian people, express full support for the Palestinian National Authority under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas and for the Palestinian national dialogue that aims to affirm Palestinian unity and create the most effective means of achieving an independent Palestinian state and achieve peace on a two-state basis in accordance with the tenets of the peace process, the relevant United Nations' resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative;

7. To reaffirm the Arab identity of Jerusalem and reject all illegal Israeli measures designed to Judaize and annex the city; to condemn Israeli excavations beneath the al-Aqsa Mosque that threaten it with collapse; and to call upon concerned international organizations and institutions, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to assume their responsibilities for preserving the Islamic and Christian holy places in East Jerusalem;

8. To condemn and affirm the illegality of the subway project connecting West Jerusalem with areas in the occupied West Bank via occupied East Jerusalem; to call upon the two French companies to withdraw immediately and to take the necessary measures against them if they fail to comply; similarly, to call upon the friendly Government of France to adopt the proper position in this regard, consistent with its responsibilities under international law;

9. To condemn vigorously the continued Israeli construction of the racist separation wall, including inside East Jerusalem, and to request the United Nations and Member States to do what is necessary to fulfil their legal obligations, in accordance with the ruling of the International Criminal Court and resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on the racist separation wall.;

10. To encourage the international community to extend protection to the Palestinian people in the face of continued Israeli violations and aggression, to condemn the state terrorism practised by the Israeli occupation authorities and strive to compel Israel to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law;

11. To condemn the brazen Israeli assault and destruction of the Jericho prison and kidnapping of a number of Palestinian nationals held there, which represents a gross violation of the Geneva Conventions and international law; to call upon the international community and, in particular, the Quartet, to condemn this criminal act, assume full responsibility for guaranteeing the security and safety of those kidnapped, pressurize Israel for their release and ensure that such violations and aggression are not repeated;

12. To express extreme concern at the tragic conditions under which Palestinian and Arab detainees live in Israeli prisons and detention centres, to demand that the international community, as represented by international human rights organizations, strives to expose the inhuman practices in Israeli jails and puts pressure on Israel for their release in accordance with signed agreements and understandings;

13. To confirm adherence to the right of return of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with the resolutions of international legality, particularly United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative; to reject all attempts at any form of resettlement incompatible with the particular situation in host Arab countries; to affirm the legal, political and moral responsibility of Israel for the creation and persistence of the refugee problem; to affirm the responsibility of the international community toward the Palestinian refugees until their case is settled; and to express gratitude for the efforts of the refugee host countries in providing suitable conditions for the refugees, including their protection.

(Summit resolution 18/336, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Support for the budget of the Palestinian National Authority and steadfastness of the Palestinian people

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Following with concern political developments on the Palestinian scene and affirming the importance of continuing to support the Palestinian economy, given the losses it has endured during more than five years of continuous Israeli aggression,

Condemning Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinian people and their capacities, aimed at undermining the economic foundations for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state,

Affirming the importance of Member States paying the obligatory contributions in support of the Palestinian National Authority budget, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian economy in accordance with the resolutions of Arab Summits in Beirut (2002), Sharm el-Sheikh (2003), Tunis (2004) and Algiers (2005),

Resolves

1. To call upon the Arab States to continue to support the budget of the Palestinian National Authority for a further period commencing 1 April 2006, in

accordance with the principles and mechanisms adopted at the Beirut Summit (2002) in support of the budget and to undertake to pay their shares in accordance with the same mechanism adopted at the Beirut Summit (2002) for the period from 1 October 2005 to 31 March 2006;

2. To extend gratitude to those Arab States that have paid their commitments or part thereof in support of the budget of the Palestinian National Authority in accordance with the decisions of previous summits; to call upon States that have not paid their commitments to do so promptly; and to charge the Secretariat-General to continue to issue a monthly report showing the status of payment and circulate this to Member States;

3. To call upon the international community to continue to provide grants and financial and economic assistance to the Palestinian National Authority, respect the democratic choice of the Palestinians, caution against continuing to call for the cessation of support for the Palestinian National Authority after the last legislative elections, to reject the assumptions on which these calls are based and draw attention to the dangerous, negative consequences for the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people and for stability and security in the region;

4. To request the Palestinian National Authority to prepare a report on the size and scale of the grants and assistance it might lose in the event that several states or donor agencies continue to link the provision of assistance to political conditions inconsistent with the goals and interests of the Palestinian people and to submit this for consideration to the Council of the League at ministerial level at its next (126th) session;

5. To condemn the Israeli decision to suspend the transfer of tax revenues and customs duties due to the Palestinian side, to call upon the Quartet and the international community to put pressure on Israel to repeal this decision and to affirm that Israel has no right to deprive the Palestinian people of these resources which it collects on its behalf in accordance with agreements concluded between the two parties;

6. To condemn the measures Israel has imposed at the crossing points in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, in violation of the provisions of international law, international humanitarian law and the agreement on the crossing points reached under the auspices of the Quartet; and to caution of the consequences of continuing to impose such arbitrary measures touching all aspects of the daily lives of Palestinians and threatening to undermine the Arab and international efforts to reinvigorate and rehabilitate the Palestinian economy;

7. To extend gratitude to the Arab States that have fulfilled their financial obligations in support of the al-Aqsa Fund and Intifada Al-Quds Fund and the additional support decided for both; and to appeal to those states that have not fulfilled their obligations in respect of the additional support to do so promptly to enable both funds to complete their relief and development work in the Palestinian territories, in accordance with the resolution of the extraordinary Summit (Cairo 2000) by which they were established;

8. To call upon Arab financial and economic funds and institutions of Joint Arab Action to contribute to the provision of support to the Palestinian people and to intensify their efforts and programmes providing financial and technical assistance to strengthen the economic and institutional capacities of the Palestinian people;

9. To call upon all Arab and Islamic States which have not yet affiliated to the al-Aqsa Fund and Intifada Al-Quds Fund to do so and to call upon States that have contributed to increase their contributions to the Funds' resources to serve the basic requirements of the Palestinian economy and the development process;

10. To appeal to voluntary organizations in the Arab and Islamic worlds and other donors to make use of the technical capacity and mechanisms of contract and payment established by the Islamic Development Bank to fund programmes and projects responding to the essential priorities of the Palestinian people and implement these in accordance with the best standards and practices of transparency, efficiency and effectiveness;

11. To extend gratitude to the Arab peoples, institutions and civil organizations for their support and donations in support of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the face of the arbitrary and destructive Israeli policies and practices and to call upon them to continue this support; to request the Secretariat-General to continue to open accounts for this purpose with Arab banks; and to organize campaigns to collect donations from the Arab peoples to support relief and development work in the Palestinian territories;

12. To extend gratitude to the Arab States that have issued directives to their customs posts, opened their markets to the free flow of products of Palestinian origin and exempted these from customs duties and taxes with equivalent impact, in implementation of the resolutions of the Council of the League at summit level in this regard and reaffirmation of resolution 200 (Cairo, 2000) of the extraordinary session at summit level and to request states that have not implemented this resolution to do so promptly;

13. To call upon Arab States that have advised of the exemption of Palestinian goods and products from customs duties and taxes with equivalent impact when entering their markets to provide the Secretariat-General with data and information indicating the benefit to the Palestinian economy from such exemption, for possible inclusion in the periodic follow-up reports issued by the Secretariat-General.

(Summit resolution 18/337, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The occupied Syrian Arab Golan

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Recalling the resolutions of Arab Summit conferences, of which the last was resolution 298 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session, on the occupied Syrian Arab Golan,

Affirming its previous resolutions in this respect,

Resolves

1. To affirm the firm support and backing of the Arab States for Syria's just demand to recover the entire occupied Syrian Arab Golan up to the line of 4 June 1967, on the basis of the principles of the peace process and legitimate international resolutions and in accordance with accomplishments within the framework of the peace conference launched in Madrid in 1991;

2. To reaffirm rejection of all measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities aimed at changing the legal, natural and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, as measures designed to reinforce the illegal, null and void Israeli control, in violation of international agreements, the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions of international legality, in particular resolution 497 (1981) of the Security Council and resolution 32/60 (22 November 2005) of the 60th session of the General Assembly affirming that Israel's decision of 14 December 1981 to annex the occupied Syrian Arab Golan is illegal, null and void, without legal force and represents a grave violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981);

3. To reaffirm that Israel's continued occupation of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan represents an ongoing threat to peace and security in the region and the world;

4. To condemn Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, particularly in respect of the seizure of land and water resources, the construction and expansion of settlements and transporting of settlers thereto, the exploitation of natural resources, the construction of projects and imposition of an economic boycott on and forbidding the export of the agricultural produce of the Arab population;

5. To affirm the Arab position of full solidarity with Syria and Lebanon, standing with them in confronting continuing Israeli aggression and threats, since aggression against them is considered as aggression against the Arab nation, and to condemn the economic sanctions imposed on Syria;

6. To support the steadfastness of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, standing beside them in their resistance to the Israeli occupation and its repressive practices and their insistence on holding on to their land and their Syrian Arab identity; to affirm the need to apply the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) to the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan; and to condemn, on the basis of the principles of international law and tenets of international legality, the Israeli occupation authorities for their gross violations of all the rights of the Syrian inhabitants, young and old, living under occupation in the Golan, resulting in the displacement and expulsion of thousands, the pillage of their lands, separation of families and the consequences of this situation on the lives of the children and their education, in addition to numerous other violations of children's rights in contravention of international obligations arising from the international Convention on the Rights of the Child;

7. To condemn the practices and provocations of the Israeli occupation forces against the inhabitants of the Syrian village of Ghajar in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, with the aim of partitioning it, displacing its inhabitants and constructing a separation wall between the inhabitants and their lands and livelihood. Israel's forcible transfer of the civilian population to the southern part of the village is a violation of international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. According to article 7 of the Statutes of the International Criminal Court, such acts are regarded as a crime against humanity, falling within its jurisdiction and punishable. Any partition is designed to infringe Syrian sovereignty over the village. The international community is called upon to assume its responsibility to pressurize Israel to stop it from partitioning the village and put an end to the humanitarian, social and economic suffering of its inhabitants under the occupation and to support Syria in reserving its right to take whatever measures are necessary to prevent partition of the village;

8. To uphold the resolutions of international legality requiring non-recognition of any situation resulting from Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Arab lands, given that this is an illegal action from which neither right nor obligation arises and that the establishment of settlements and housing of settlers represents a dangerous violation of the Geneva Conventions and a war crime under the First Protocol additional thereto and a violation of the principles of the peace process requiring that all Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and the occupied Arab lands be terminated;

9. To urge the international community to uphold the resolutions of international legality rejecting Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan by condemning the practices of the Israeli Government, which declared its intention on 31 December 2003 of establishing seven new settlements, expanding existing ones, doubling the number of settlers and allocating the approvals necessary to implement this, in opposition to the peaceful Arab and international approaches aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the resolutions of international legality and the Arab Peace Initiative agreed at the Beirut Summit (2002);

10. To condemn the policies of the Israeli Government that have destroyed the peace process and led to the continued escalation of tension in the region and to call upon the international community, in particular the sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference and the European Union, to induce Israel to apply the resolutions of the United Nations on full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and all occupied Arab lands to the line of 4 June 1967.

(Summit resolution 18/338, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Solidarity with and support for Lebanon

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming its previous resolutions in this respect, of which the last was resolution 298 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Drawing attention to recent domestic and international developments in relation to Lebanon,

Resolves

1. To condemn Israel vigorously for continuing to occupy Lebanese territory and locations on the Lebanese border, for continuing to detain Lebanese in its prisons, for failure to turn over to the United Nations all maps of the location of mines laid by its armed forces during their occupation and for its continual land, sea and air violations of Lebanese sovereignty;

2. To affirm support for Lebanon in its sovereign right to make its own political choices within the principles and institutions of its Constitution, taking into consideration its right to establish relations with sisterly and friendly states on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and independence, its national interests and equality;

3. To consider that uncovering the truth of the terrorist assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and his companions and of the crimes which preceded and followed it, from the attempted assassination of Minister Marwan Hamadeh to the martyrdom of Deputy Gibran Tueni and the pursuit of the perpetrators whoever they may be and wherever they are, will contribute to consolidating security and stability in Lebanon and the region;

4. To affirm its desire for the support of the Arab States for political, economic and security stability in Lebanon, to reject the pressures put upon Lebanon and to condemn Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty and independence;

5. To affirm support for Lebanon:

(a) In its endeavour to recover the Israeli-occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms and Kafr Shuba Hills, as required by Security Council resolution 425 (1978), the communiqués of the Lebanese Government demonstrating on the basis of the procedures and principles observed and accepted by the United Nations that the Shebaa Farms are Lebanese, while confirming that the Lebanese resistance is a genuine and natural expression of the right of the Lebanese people to liberate their territory and defend their honour in the face of Israeli aggression and ambition;

(b) In its demand for the release of Lebanese prisoners and detainees remaining in Israeli prisons as hostages, in contravention of international law, the International Declaration Of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions (1949) and the Hague Convention (1907), and request that the international community put pressure on Israel for their release;

(c) In calling upon the international community to assume responsibility and move immediately to demand that Israel desist from its threats, violations of Lebanese sovereignty and infringements of Lebanese territory, airspace and territorial waters, for the dangerous consequences of which on the security and stability of the region it must be held to account;

(d) In its demand for the removal of thousands of mines left behind by the Israeli occupation, for the laying of which and the resulting civilian deaths and injuries Israel is responsible;

(e) In its right to its own waters, in accordance with international law, in the face of Israeli ambitions;

(f) In condemning the continuing Israeli encroachments and aggression against the Blue Line, especially the bombardment by the occupation forces of southern Lebanese towns and villages long endured by Lebanese civilians.

6. To request the international community and judicial and political bodies to endeavour to:

(a) Pressurize Israel to pay compensation to Lebanon for the damage and losses resulting from its repeated aggression against its territory before, during and after the occupation;

(b) Enable representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations to visit all Lebanese detainees on a continuous basis to inspect conditions and provide with medical care;

(c) To seek a resolution from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights permitting investigations to be conducted into those detainees who have died in Israeli detention centres, with compensation paid to those bereaved as a result, in accordance with international laws and agreements.

7. To affirm the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes and caution that failure to solve the issue of refugees resident in Lebanon on the basis of their return to their homes, in accordance with the resolutions of international legality and principles of international law, or attempts to resettle them, will destabilize the region and hinder the achievement of a just peace. It welcomes the decision of the Lebanese Government to form a working party to hold discussions with Palestinian representatives to deal with the vital social, economic, legal and security issues of Palestinians in the camps and those resident in Lebanon, in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA);

8. To extend gratitude to the Member States and Arab funds that have provided help and financial assistance to the Lebanese Government and to request other Member States to fulfil the commitments agreed at Arab Summit conferences relating to support for Lebanon, the steadfastness of its people and its reconstruction;

9. To affirm condemnation of international terrorism, to which the Arab States are making an effective contribution in combating; to reject the inclusion of the resistance on terrorist lists, on the grounds that it is necessary to distinguish between terrorism and legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation; and to affirm the need to convene an international conference within the framework of the United Nations to explore the phenomenon of terrorism and draw up an international agreement to combat it that will include a precise definition of terrorism, distinguishing between it and the legitimate right of peoples to resist foreign occupation.

(Summit resolution 18/339, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Developments in the situation in Iraq

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action, his report on the situation in Iraq and its previous resolutions in this respect, of which the last was resolution 299 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at Summit level,

In the light of the outcome of the meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Iraq on 25 March 2006,

Having listened to the presentation by the head of the delegation from the Republic of Iraq,

Having conducted its deliberations,

- **Resolves**

1. To reaffirm respect for the unity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq, non-interference in its internal affairs and respect for the will of the Iraqi people and its choices in determining its future by itself;

2. To reaffirm the need for the Arab States to undertake to implement fully paragraphs 7, 8, 11 and 12 of resolution 229 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level on developments in the situation in Iraq, as an expression of fraternal, Arab solidarity with Iraq as a founder Member State of the League of Arab States;

3. To welcome the elections held on 15 December 2005, marked by a wide turnout of all elements of the Iraqi people and viewed as a fundamental step on the path to the provision of security and stability and the reconstruction of Iraq;

4. To confirm the need for the prompt formation of a government of national unity to contribute to the achievement of security, stability and preservation of the unity of the people and land of Iraq and to pave the way for the departure of foreign troops from its soil;

5. To affirm an Arab role in any consultations on the future of Iraq; to support the role played by the League of Arab States in achieving Iraqi national accord; to affirm that any consultations on Iraq shall be in the service of the Iraq people and their national interests; and to call upon the Ministerial Committee on Iraq to meet urgently, at a time to be determined at the end of the Summit, to monitor current developments in this regard;

6. To commend the outcome of the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord held at the Secretariat-General in Cairo from 19 to 21 November 2005; to call upon all participating parties to fulfil the commitments arising from this meeting, representing a cornerstone in the building of confidence and consolidation of national unity; and to affirm the importance of convening the Conference on Iraqi National Accord in June 2006;

7. To call once more upon Member States to have a diplomatic presence in Baghdad as soon as possible, in the same manner as foreign states, with the proviso that the Iraqi Government provides full protection, and to undertake Arab political and popular initiatives, such as visits to strengthen Arab contacts with Iraq;

8. To implement immediately resolution 6615 (4 March 2006) of the 125th ordinary session of the Ministerial Council to open a mission of the League of Arab States in Baghdad to activate the Arab role in Iraq and approve an initial sum of US$ 2,000,000 to cover the expense of opening the mission;

9. To welcome the undertaking of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host in Amman a conference of Iraqi leaders and religious authorities, in coordination with the Government of Iraq and the League of Arab States, to reach agreement on the most effective ways of ensuring the unity, security and stability of Iraq;

10. To affirm the importance of continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations in various areas, including preparation for the forthcoming Conference on Iraqi National Accord;

11. To condemn vigorously the shameful terrorist bombings of the shrines of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hasan al-Askari in Sammarra and subsequent, repugnant attacks on a large number of mosques and houses of worship and the death of innocent victims; to affirm the need to respect the sanctity of mosques and the places of worship of all sects and religions; to call upon all elements of the Iraqi people, political leaders and religious authorities to oppose acts of violence and terrorism, exercise self-restraint and not allow such abominable acts to damage

national unity, security and stability. To extend gratitude to the State of Kuwait for the financial support, amounting to US$ 10,000,000, it has given for the rebuilding of the shrines of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hasan al-Askari and the houses of worship and mosques destroyed, and to call upon the Arab States to contribute to the rebuilding of mosques and places of worship;

12. To condemn vigorously the terrorist attacks, raids and acts of destruction that are taking place in Iraq; to offer condolences to all victims of terrorism in Iraq, considering terrorism as a threat to peace and security in accordance with resolution 1618 (2005) of the Security Council; to condemn all incitement to and funding of terrorism against the Iraqi people; and to call upon all Arab States to cooperate constructively and fraternally to ensure the stability and reconstruction of Iraq;

13. To condemn once more the grave violations of human rights that occurred during the occupation of the State of Kuwait and the expunging of the facts relating to Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons, some of whose remains have been found in mass graves; to express deep condolences to the families of the victims whose remains have been identified and concern at the ordeal of those location remains unknown; and to demand that all efforts be made to discover the fate of all Kuwaiti and other missing persons and prisoners;

14. To reaffirm support for the efforts of the Government of Iraq and all concerned parties to strengthen security measures in Iraq, particularly with regard to Arab and foreign diplomatic missions, and ensure the effective protection of all diplomatic envoys, representatives of regional and international companies and organizations and businessmen, in order to maintain, encourage, promote and expand the Arab and foreign diplomatic presence in Iraq;

15. To urge Arab States to cancel Iraqi debt and donor Arab States to fulfil their financial commitments; to affirm the importance of contributing actively to the reconstruction of Iraq; and to call upon all Arab governmental and non-governmental agencies, funds and financial institutions to provide prompt support and assistance;

16. To commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretaries-General in strengthening contact with all elements of the Iraqi people, to express appreciation for his role and that of his special representative to Iraq for the success of the Arab initiative to convene a comprehensive Conference On Iraqi National Accord, to request the Secretary-General to continue these efforts and to take the measures necessary for the convening of the forthcoming Conference On Iraqi National Accord at the scheduled time, including organizing preparatory meetings to bring together the various Iraqi political and religious forces, in coordination with the Government of Iraq and representatives of Iraqi political forces.

(Summit resolution 18/340, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The Iranian occupation of the Arabian Gulf islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, belonging to the United Arab Emirates

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General, the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming its previous resolutions in this respect, of which the last was resolution 300 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level on the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the Arabian Gulf islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, belonging to the United Arab Emirates,

Resolves

1. To affirm unreservedly the full sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and to support all peaceful measures and means taken by the United Arab Emirates to regain sovereignty over its occupied islands;

2. To reject the continued occupation by the Government of Iran of the three islands and violation of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates, destabilizing the security of the region and causing a threat to international peace and security;

3. To condemn the Iranian Government's construction of housing facilities to settle Iranians in the three occupied Arab islands;

4. To condemn the Iranian military manoeuvres around the three occupied islands – Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa – of the United Arab Emirates and in the territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of the three islands, which are an indivisible part of the United Arab Emirates, and to demand that Iran refrains from such violations and provocative actions, which are considered to be an interference in the internal affairs of an independent, sovereign state, do not help in building trust, threaten the region's security and stability and put the security and safety of regional and international shipping in the Arabian Gulf at risk;

5. To call once more upon the Government of Iran to end its occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, refrain from de facto imposition by force, stop the construction of any facilities on the islands designed to alter their population and demographic composition, annul all measures and remove all facilities constructed unilaterally by it on the three Arab islands, since such measures and claims are null and void with no legal force, do not diminish the United Arab Emirates' firm right to its three islands and are actions in violation of international law, the Geneva Convention (1949), and to demand that Iran follows peaceful means to resolve the dispute in accordance with the principles and rules of international law, including accepting referral of the case to the International Court of Justice;

6. To express the hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will reconsider its position of rejecting a peaceful solution to the three occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, either through serious and direct negotiations or by referral to the International Court of Justice;

7. To demand that Iran translate its declared wish for improved relations, dialogue and removal of tension with the Arab States into practical and tangible measures, in word and deed, by responding genuinely to the serious and sincere calls from the United Arab Emirates, the States of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, the Arab States, international blocs and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to resolve the dispute over the three occupied islands by peaceful means, in accordance with established practice, the charters and tenets of international law, through serious and direct negotiations or by referral to the International Court of Justice, in order to develop trust and strengthen the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf region;

8. That all Arab States, in the communications with Iran, undertake to raise the issue of its occupation of the three islands in order to underline the necessity of ending it on the grounds that the three islands are occupied Arab territories;

9. To inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the Security Council of the importance of the issue remaining before the Security Council until Iran ends its occupation of the three Arab islands and the United Arab Emirates recovers sovereignty over them;

10. To request that the Secretary-General monitors the situation and presents a report to the next session of the Council.

(Summit resolution 18/341, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Addressing the losses and measures resulting from the dispute over the Lockerbie issue

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Welcoming resolution 1506 (12 September 2003) of the Security Council requiring immediate lifting of the sanctions measures imposed on the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya,

Affirming resolution 229 (28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, resolution 266 (23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session and resolution 301 (23 May 2005) of the 17th ordinary session, affirming the right of the Great Jamahiriya to obtain compensation from the physical and human damage suffered as a result of the sanctions imposed upon it and demanding the release of Libyan national, Abdelbaset al-Megrahi, considering his continued detention to be that of a hostage according to all international laws and established practice,

Referring to resolution 6617 (4 March 2006) of the 125th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level,

Recalling the extensive losses suffered by the Great Jamahiriya from the sanctions imposed upon it,

Resolves

1. To affirm the right of the Great Jamahiriya to seek compensation for the material and human losses caused by the sanctions imposed upon it;

2. To affirm the demand for the release of the Libyan national, Abdelbaset al-Megrahi, considering his continued detention to be that of a hostage according to all international laws and established practice;

3. To request the Secretary-General to monitor implementation of the resolution and submit a report to the next ordinary session of the League at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/342, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Rejection of the unilateral United States' sanctions on the Syrian Arab Republic

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Expressing once more surprise and concern at the passing by the United States' Congress of the so-called Syria Accountability Act and the executive order signed by the US President on 11 May 2004 unilaterally imposing sanctions outside the framework of international legality,

Having taken cognizance of the statements, declarations and resolutions issued by various international governmental quarters and non-governmental organizations expressing the international community's repudiation of any state setting its national legislation above international law with the aim of infringing the sovereignty and interests of other States and peoples,

Observing that the unilateral imposition of arbitrary laws conflicts with the provisions and approach of the World Trade Organization, which prohibits measures designed to obstruct the freedom of international trade and shipping,

Expressing surprise at the passing of this Act against an Arab country fundamental to the stability and security of the region at a time when the United States is seeking cooperation with the Arab States to combat international terrorism and achieve the reforms necessary to create the broadest possible partnership between both sides,

Upholding resolution 263 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session and resolution 302 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States,

Resolves

1. To reject the so-called Syria Accountability Act as a breach of the principles of international law, resolutions of the United Nations and the Charter of the League of Arab States and as giving primacy to the laws of the United States over international law;

2. Upon full solidarity with the Syrian Arab Republic and appreciation of its position calling for the primacy of the language of dialogue and diplomacy as a means of understanding between States and resolution of disputes between them, and to call upon the United States Administration to enter in good faith into constructive dialogue with Syria to find the best way of settling the issues hindering improved relations between the two countries;

3. To request the United States to reconsider this Act, blatantly biased in favour of Israel and a serious infringement of Arab interests, in order to avoid a

deterioration of the situation and squandering of the opportunities to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East;

4. To request that the Secretary-General monitors implementation of this resolution and submits a report thereon to the next ordinary session of the Council.

(Summit resolution 18/343, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Support for peace, development and unity in the Republic of the Sudan

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming its previous resolutions in this respect,

Affirming respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Sudan and requesting all States to affirm this commitment in practice and support the efforts aimed at achieving peace and national accord among the people of Sudan,

Expressing great concern at developments in the situation in Darfur region and the humanitarian crisis facing the displaced population and refugees from the region in Chad,

Welcoming the resolution (Addis Ababa, 10 March 2006) of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union,

Affirming implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, on 9 January 2005 between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement,

Resolves

I. On the issue of Darfur

1. To affirm the continued efforts of the African Union and accomplishment of its mission in addressing the Darfur crisis, particularly its sponsorship of political mediation and backing and monitoring of the ceasefire; to affirm that the deployment of other forces to the region shall require prior agreement from the Government of the Sudan; to request that the Arab States provide financial and material support to the African Union mission to enable it to continue its task; and to request the African Arab States to strengthen their participation among the African Union forces and observers in Darfur region;

2. To bear the cost of the African Union forces in Darfur for a period of six months from 1 October 2006;

3. To work with all parties involved in the Darfur issue for rapid political and diplomatic movement, with priority given to a comprehensive, peaceful solution;

4. To call upon all negotiating parties at the Sudanese peace talks on Darfur in Abuja to work with determination and speed to reach a final and comprehensive settlement agreement on the Darfur crisis during the current round of negotiations;

5. To appreciate the role of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in ending the tense situation between the Republic of the Sudan and Republic of Chad and to affirm the need to implement the Tripoli Declaration, signed on 8 February 2006, restoring normal relations between the two neighbours;

6. To provide rapid support for the Sudan's efforts to deal with the humanitarian crisis and restore security and stability to Darfur; to extend gratitude to Member States that have provided humanitarian assistance to Darfur region; to call upon Member States, specialized Arab organizations and ministerial councils and Arab civil society organizations to provide urgent humanitarian assistance and technical support; and to affirm the direct presence of the Arab States in the Darfur region to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims;

7. To extend gratitude to those Arab States, organizations and societies that responded promptly by providing humanitarian assistance to the Darfur victims and to call upon all Arab parties, including specialized Arab organizations and civil society organizations, to affirm their presence in the Darfur region and refugee camps and undertake urgent humanitarian relief efforts for the victims;

8. To appreciate the positive participation of the League of Arab States in the peace talks between the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements in Darfur, held under the auspices of the African Union in Abuja, Nigeria and to request that it continue its efforts with the concerned parties until a final settlement of the crisis is reached.

II. On the issue of Southern Sudan

1. To welcome the steps taken to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement signed in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi and to request they continue their efforts to implement the agreement;

2. To charge the Ministerial Committee for the Sudan to monitor the provision of financial contributions from the Arab States to the Arab fund to support the Sudan to develop the south of the country and the war-torn areas, and to set a timetable in accordance with the priorities set out by the Government of the Sudan;

3. To request the Secretariat-General to call upon Member States, the Arab Monetary Fund and concerned Arab development funds to hold an emergency meeting to examine the treatment of their Sudanese debt, to support the path of peace and encourage development and reconstruction efforts in all parts of the Sudan;

4. To call upon Arab States, funds and funding organizations to continue their efforts and participate actively in the Fourth Coordinating Meeting for Development and Investment in Southern Sudan this year in order to coordinate development-related investment in the south of the country and the war-torn areas, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and social and public services;

5. To call upon the Secretariat-General to open speedily an office of the League of Arab States at Juba in Southern Sudan to coordinate Arab aid and contribute to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

III. To call upon the various parties in Eastern Sudan to reach a prompt and peaceful solution to the problem through peace negotiations, under the auspices of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and with the participation of the League of Arab States.

IV. To appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General and request him to continue his efforts with the Government of the Sudan, the Sudanese parties and regional and international entities in support of the path of peace and reconciliation in the Sudan and to submit a report on this to the next ordinary session at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/344, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Statement on making the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction, principally nuclear weapons

The Arab leaders express grave concern at the negative international developments relating to nuclear disarmament and the setbacks the non-proliferation regime has experienced, particularly the failure of the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. This represents an unacceptable reversal of the success of the 1995 and 2000 review conferences, particularly in relation to the Middle East.

Expressing their support for and commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the foundation of the non-proliferation regime, the Arab leaders request the international community to support this Treaty by making it global and activating with equal concern the three pillars upon which it is based namely, nuclear disarmament, the right of Member States to acquire and develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

They likewise affirm their total repudiation of the possession of nuclear weapons or any weapons of mass destruction by any state in the Middle East given the dangerous consequences thereof to regional and international peace and security and the regional environment. They remind the international community that the Arab States, without exception, voluntarily acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty prior to 2000 and that security and stability in the Middle East shall only be achieved if Israel, following the example of the other States of the region, accedes to the Treaty, adheres to its provisions and subjects all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive system of guarantees of the International Atomic Energy Association. They caution that the continuation of this situation will lead to further breaches in the region's security and stability and, moreover, plunge the region into an arms race with disastrous consequences.

On this basis, the Arab leaders reaffirm that the optimum solution for preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region is to pursue a comprehensive regional approach through adoption by the international community of the Arab initiative which has, for several years, called for the Middle East to be a region free from weapons of mass destruction, principally nuclear weapons. They affirm that continuing to address the risks of the proliferation of such weapons in the Middle East with each state on an individual and selective basis is incompatible with international policy in this area.

They request the Secretary-General to continue to monitor this issue and submit a report on the security situation in the Arab region, in the light of regional and international developments, to the next ordinary session of Council of the League at summit level.

Support for the Republic of Somalia

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Pursuant to Arab Summit resolutions, of which the last was resolution 304 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Resolves

1. To welcome the positive developments and achievements of the Somali reconciliation process under the auspices of His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen, to appreciate the steps taken for the implementation thereof, including the convening of the Somali interim parliament at Baidoa, and to call for positive cooperation with the legitimate Somali institutions in order to build Somali state institutions, strengthen the process of reconciliation and cement the pillars of security and stability;

2. To commend the decision of the interim Federal Government to return to Somali territory, to extend gratitude to Member States that have fulfilled their financial obligations to the fund in support of Somalia and to call upon Member States that have not paid their contributions to provide promptly the immediate aid determined by resolution 304 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level of US$ 26,000,000 by means of the Secretariat-General fund, to be paid on the basis of state contributions to the League budget, in order to meet the urgent needs of the Government of Somalia, particularly after its relocation to Somalia;

3. To welcome the opening of an office of the League of Arab States in Somalia to assume the coordination of Arab aid for institution building and Somali reconstruction efforts;

4. That Member States and Arab civil society organizations provide immediate humanitarian assistance to overcome the current humanitarian crisis in Somalia caused by the spread of drought and desertification and to avert the risk of famine;

5. To appeal to the international community to provide prompt assistance to the Government of Somalia to enable it to complete and cement the foundations of security and stability, preserve the territorial unity of Somalia and enable Somalia to regain its place with the Arab family and its regional and international environment;

6. To request from the Security Council reconsideration of the resolution banning the export of arms to Somalia in order to enable rebuilding of the police and security forces, to call upon the concerned organizations of the United Nations to prepare an urgent programme for the disarming of the Somali militias and incorporation of

their personnel into the organizations of the state and civil society, and to call upon the Secretariat-General to cooperate with the African Union mission to coordinate efforts in this regard;

7. To call upon the Somali groups to adopt dialogue as the sole means of resolving conflicts, to condemn acts of violence and strife and to warn perpetrators that sanctions will be imposed upon them by the Security Council;

8. To welcome the coordinating efforts of the Secretariat-General with the Government of Somalia and the United Nations Development Programme to implement the project for development of the Somali livestock sector and to call upon Arab States to lift the ban on Somali exports, within the framework of the partnership between Arab States and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, to promote investment and agricultural growth;

9. To call upon the committee on Somalia charged by the Council of the League of Arab States to set a strategy, to be submitted to the next Arab Summit, to expedite support for Somalia in various areas in order to strengthen the institutions of the interim Government and ensure the return of security and stability throughout Somalia and reconstruction of the country; and to request the Arab States to forgive Somali debt owed to them, in view of the devastation the country has suffered due to the civil war;

10. That the Secretariat-General continues its efforts with the Government of Somalia and the World Health Organization to rehabilitate seven hospitals in various regions of Somalia and provide drugs and medical equipment at a cost of approximately US$ 500,000 from the Somalia aid account;

11. To extend gratitude to Arab organizations that have given aid to Somalia and to call upon specialized Arab organizations and ministerial councils to coordinate with the Secretariat-General and cooperate with the Government of Somalia to implement the development programme for the reconstruction and development of Somalia, particularly in the areas of health, the environment and development projects in all areas, particularly those related to infrastructure development;

12. To call upon the Secretariat-General to continue to work on the international front and cooperate with concerned international organizations to salvage and clean up the area devastated by the effects of the environmental disaster wrought by the tsunami;

13. To call upon Member States to take the measures necessary to implement the clauses of this resolution;

14. To extend gratitude to the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretaries-General for their valued efforts and request continuation of the efforts to monitor implementation of this resolution and the presentation of a report thereon to the next ordinary session of Council of the League at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/345, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Support for the Union of Comoros

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming previous resolutions in this regard,

Resolves

1. To affirm its consummate desire for the national unity, territorial integrity and regional sovereignty of the Union of Comoros;

2. To support the positive developments in the Comoros, particularly in relation to the ongoing implementation of the national reconciliation pact signed at Moroni on 20 December 2003, to call upon regional and international organizations and States concerned with the situation in the Union of the Comoros to collaborate with the Secretariat-General in working toward overcoming any difficulties resulting from application of the country's new Constitution, and to provide development assistance enabling the Union of the Comoros to create balanced development among its islands;

3. To support the presidential elections in the Union of the Comoros scheduled country-wide for 14 May 2006, preceded by primaries on 16 April 2006 on the island of Anjouan, and to mandate the Secretariat-General to participate in the preparations and monitoring of the elections in cooperation with concerned regional and international organizations;

4. To welcome the positive outcome of the Conference of Donors for the Comoros, held in the Republic of Mauritius on 8 December 2005, to expedite mobilization of the financial resources necessary for economic revival in the Union of Comoros, to direct gratitude to Arab States and Arab financing and investment funds that participated to effect in the conference, and to call upon all Arab States and Arab financing and investment funds to direct economic and social development investments to the Union of Comoros;

5. To extend gratitude to those Member States which fulfilled their financial obligations to the Union of Comoros aid fund in implementation of resolution 230 (Beirut, 28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, and to call upon States which have not done so, to remit their contributions to the fund account promptly to enable the Secretariat-General to continue implementation of economic development projects in the Union of Comoros;

6. To request Member States and Arab financing and investment funds, in particular the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, to support the Walida National Association in the Union of Comoros;

7. To express appreciation to the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for opening an embassy in the Union of the Comoros and to call upon other Member States to open diplomatic missions there;

8. To expedite the opening of an office of the League of Arab States in the Union of the Comoros to support the League's role in achieving a political settlement and supervise implementation of Arab projects;

9. To request the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to provide all assistance possible to support teaching in Arabic in the Union of the Comoros;

10. To express appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General in implementing development projects in the Union of the Comoros and his efforts in cooperating with regional and international organizations to achieve Comorian reconciliation, to request the continuation of development aid to the Union of the Comoros in the light of the sums received by the Arab league aid fund for the Union of Comoros and to submit a report on this to the next session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/346, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Afro-Arab cooperation

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming previous resolutions in this regard,

Resolves

I. Afro-Arab cooperation:

1. To affirm the importance of continuing the efforts to remove obstacles to activating and developing Afro-Arab cooperation and organizing meetings of its bodies in the light of resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level and to request the Secretary-General to follow up contacts in this matter to arrive at a stage of real and beneficial joint cooperation on the basis of shared political, economic, commercial and cultural interests, laying the foundations to consolidate Afro-Arab relations and avert risk;

2. To intensify efforts between the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States and the African Union mission to convene the 2nd Afro-Arab Summit Conference at the earliest possible opportunity;

3. To renew the call to Member States for active participation in the 7th Afro-Arab Trade Fair, scheduled for 4 to 12 November 2006 in Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, and to charge the Secretariat-General with continuing the efforts to ensure proper preparation for the fair, in collaboration with the host nation, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the African Union mission;

4. To call upon Member States to provide financial and technical support for the activities of the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute by hosting its cultural programmes, festivals and symposiums;

5. To intensify efforts among the Secretariat-General, the African Union mission and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to do what is necessary to enable the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute to continue its work, ensure that ALECSO settles its arrears to past years' budgets and pays its contribution promptly for 2005 and to call upon the Arab

Bank for Economic Development in Africa to consider support for the Institute's training programmes,

6. To appeal to Member States and relevant Joint Arab Action organizations to provide urgent food aid to the inhabitants of regions facing drought and desertification in the Republic of Niger, the Republic of Djibouti, the Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Kenya and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

7. To call upon Arab businessmen to participate actively in the Afro-Arab Economic Forum scheduled to be held on the occasion of the Summit Conference of the Member States of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) from 7 to 12 November 2006 in Djibouti;

8. To call upon the Arab States to provide logistic support to the Republic of Djibouti to enable it to prepare properly for the COMESA Summit;

9. To take cognizance of the recommendations of the Symposium for Afro-Arab Cooperation organized by the Government of the Republic of the Sudan in cooperation with the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States and the African Union in Khartoum from 18 to 19 March 2006, in implementation of the resolution of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Algiers;

10. To call upon the Secretariat-General to strengthen the League's mission in Addis Ababa and expedite the opening of a mission to Pretoria, South Africa to support and strengthen the mechanism of Afro-Arab cooperation;

11. To request the Secretary-General to monitor implementation of the resolution and submit a report thereon to the next ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

II. The Arab Fund for Technical Assistance to African Countries:

1. To affirm the continuation of the efforts in support of the Fund in accordance with the address of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and President of the 17th ordinary session to their Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, the Kings, Presidents and Emirs of the Arab States;

2. To affirm the importance of the Fund's role in providing technical assistance to African States in activation of Afro-Arab cooperation;

3. To affirm the importance of the study the Secretariat-General was commissioned to prepare, in coordination with the Fund's economic and social committee, for presentation to the Ministerial Council at the September 2006 session, in accordance with resolution 6597 (8 September 2005) of the 124th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level.

(Summit resolution 18/347, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Arab-European cooperation

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Affirming previous resolutions in this regard,

Resolves

1. To affirm the importance of activating and stimulating a comprehensive Arab-European dialogue in support of existing Arab-European political, economic, cultural and social ties and in furtherance of joint interest;

2. To welcome the Secretary-General's call to hold a symposium for Arab-European dialogue under the auspices of the joint Arab-European Chambers of Commerce entitled, "Towards a Strategic Arab-European Partnership" and scheduled to be held at L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris from 26 to 27 April 2006. The Arab-French Chamber of Commerce is organizing the symposium with the aim of supporting and activating the framework of existing Arab-European cooperation.

(Summit resolution 18/348, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Sino-Arab cooperation

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Resolves

1. To welcome the achievements of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum and initiatives of the People's Republic of China in this area and to affirm the importance of continuing the efforts to strengthen Sino-Arab cooperation within the framework of the Forum;

2. To welcome the convening of the second ministerial meeting of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum from 31 May to 1 June 2006 in Beijing and to affirm the importance of effective Arab participation in this meeting, which the Chinese side anticipates will help to create a developed Sino-Arab partnership;

3. To affirm the support of the Arab States for the principle of a united China and the desire to strengthen relations with the People's Republic of China in different areas.

(Summit resolution 18/349, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Arab cooperation with the Americas

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Resolves

I. Follow-up to the outcome of the South American and Arab Countries Summit

1. To welcome the positive outcome of the first South American and Arab Countries Summit held in Brazil from 10 to 11 May 2005, which represented a significant development in strengthening the cooperative relations between the Arab and South American States in various areas in the service of mutual interests;

2. To express satisfaction at the steps taken by both sides to implement the Brasilia Declaration in various areas of cooperation;

3. To request the Secretariat-General, in coordination with the South American side, to continue to monitor implementation of the outcome of the Brasilia Summit and present the matter to the next ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States.

II. The second US-Arab Economic Forum in Houston, Texas from 26 to 28 June 2006:

1. To welcome the convening of the second round of the US-Arab Economic Forum in Houston, Texas from 26 to 28 June 2006 and to call upon Member States to participate actively in the work of the Forum to strengthen Arab-American economic ties;

2. To commission the Secretariat-General to monitor the subject and submit a report to the next ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States.

(Summit resolution 18/350, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Socio-economic issues

Report on the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and the performance of associated economic sectors

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the report of the Economic and Social Council on the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and the Performance of Associated Economic Sectors and taken cognizance of its contents,

Having studied memorandum 287 (14 March 2006) of the Republic of Tunisia on the World Summit on the Information Society,

Affirming its resolutions on the strengthening of Arab economic activity and the completion and launch of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area,

Esteeming highly the efforts of the Social and Economic Council in monitoring implementation of these resolutions, supporting Arab economic integration and raising rates of growth in Arab countries,

Reaffirming its call to all concerned bodies in Arab States to combine efforts to expedite the achievement of Arab economic integration,

Taking cognizance of the fact that the convention establishing the Arab Organization for Telecommunications and Information Technology came into effect on 17 September 2005,

Resolves

Firstly,

1. To affirm the necessity of complying with resolution 212 (Amman, 28 March 2001) of the 13th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, resolutions 233 and 234 (Beirut, 28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session, resolutions 272, 273, 275 and 280 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session and resolutions 308, 309, 313 and 315 (Algiers, 28 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session;

2. To call upon the Arab States to participate in the current negotiations on liberalization of the trade in services between Arab States, in accordance with the general provisions of the agreement reached by the Social and Economic Council;

3. That the Social and Economic Council submit a comprehensive report on the establishment of an Arab Customs Union to the next ordinary session in 2007;

Secondly,

1. To expedite the conclusion of measures relating to the Agreement Regulating the Transit of Passengers between Arab States within the framework of the concerned bodies in the League of Arab States, in order to facilitate the movement of citizens and tourists between the Arab States;

2. To affirm resolution 309 (Algiers, 28 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level calling upon the Arab States to expedite ratification of the agreement liberalizing air transportation between the Arab States in order to enable work to begin on the last stage of the air transportation liberalization programme, scheduled to commence in November 2006; similarly, to call upon the Arab States to ratify the agreement on the joint Arab negotiating mechanism with regional and sub-regional blocs in the sphere of air transportation;

3. To charge the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport with creating appropriate mechanisms and frameworks to stimulate Arab cooperation in the field of safety and security in transportation facilities;

Thirdly,

To request the Economic and Social Council to monitor the prompt completion of the Joint Arab Strategy for Economic and Social Action, in accordance with resolution 280 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level;

Fourthly,

1. To call upon the Arab States to follow up the resolutions of the World Summit on the Information Society, particularly at international level, in order to benefit this sector in Arab States;

2. To charge the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunication and Information Technology and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to continue monitoring implementation of the resolutions of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, particularly in relation to the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda documents, in order to narrow the digital gap between the developed and developing countries, and to present the results of this work to the Economic and Social Council;

3. To call upon Arab States that have signed the agreement establishing the Arab Organization for Telecommunications and Information Technology to expedite ratification measures;

(Summit resolution 18/351, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Report on the state of tourism in the Arab States, requirements for its stimulation and proposals for development

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the report submitted by the chair of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism on the state of tourism in the Arab states, assessment of tourist activity, impediments to and requirements for its stimulation and proposals for development,

Referring with pride to the report's statement that tourism in the Arab States has grown by an average of double that of its international counterparts,

Emphasizing the efforts within the framework of the League of Arab States for a draft Agreement Regulating the Transit of Passengers between Arab States, which is expected to have a positive impact on tourism in the Arab region,

Cognizant of the importance of strengthening the competitiveness of the Arab tourism industry, in keeping with the wealth of tourist assets in the Arab region,

Recalling and affirming resolution 237 (Beirut, 28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session and resolution 310 (Algiers, 28 March 2005) of the17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level supporting inter-Arab tourism and the Arab tourism sector in general,

Resolves

1. To charge the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism with setting an integrated tourism strategy, aimed at developing tourism in the Arab States, taking into consideration national, Arab and international dimensions and the active partnership between the public and private sectors and containing the measures and facilities required to stimulate tourism by land, air and sea to and within the Arab region, and to present this strategy to the Summit through the Economic and Social Council;

2. To affirm implementation of resolution 423 (2004) of the 21st session of the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior on means of reducing entry visa conditions between Arab States and to charge the Council with presenting a periodic report on the monitoring of implementation to the Summit.

(Summit resolution 18/352, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Establishment of the Arab Environment Facility

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the resolution 227 (21 December 2005) of the 17th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Environmental Affairs,

Recalling resolution 273 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level adopting the

Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and resolution 313 (Algiers, 28 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level approving a plan to implement the Initiative, including establishment of the Arab Environment Facility,

Welcoming the readiness of the Lebanese Republic to host the founding secretariat of the Arab Environment Facility, if established,

Resolves

To call upon the Council of Arab Ministers for Environmental Affairs, in coordination with the Economic and Social Council, to study the funding of environmental programmes in the Arab region, including establishment of the Arab Environmental Facility, in accordance with the statutory measures in force.

(Summit resolution 18/353, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Development of education in the Arab world

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action and his submission to the Council on the development of education at pan-Arab level,

Affirming the need to develop education in the Arab world,

Having studied the matter,

Resolves

1. To request the Secretary-General to form a high-level team of experts to examine all levels and aspects of education in the Arab world and make the recommendations necessary to boost education in the Arab world;

2. To request the Secretary-General to consult with officials of the concerned Joint Arab Action agencies, including the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), to benefit from the experience of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf in this regard and to monitor the work of the team and submit a comprehensive report on its proposals to the next session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/354, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Support for and development of scientific and technological research in the Arab States

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the proposals from the Republic of the Sudan on support for Arab cooperation in scientific and technological research,

Believing in the importance of technological research to all aspects of the development process and of strengthening the role of centres of scientific research and universities in the Arab States,

Resolves

1. To call upon Member States to increase expenditure on scientific and technical research and development, to strive to sponsor and support scientific and technical research institutions and units and to make available the human and technical resources to enable these to carry out their role in scientific and technical development in the Arab states;

2. To strengthen contacts with expatriate Arab scientists and engineers, to conclude scientific cooperation agreements on scientific research and development with local, Arab, regional and international bodies and to coordinate with these;

3. To strive to put in place the necessary policies, legislation and mechanisms to encourage demand for training centres and institutions of science and technology and to support studies and research projects focusing on finding scientific and practical solutions to the enhancement of areas of quality in educational, scientific and technical institutions;

4. To affirm the importance of the role of the private sector in the development of scientific and technological research and to provide financial support through partnership with the government sector, with particular attention to be given to the applied aspects of scientific research;

5. To charge the Secretariat-General to cooperate with the concerned authorities in the Republic of the Sudan to convene a symposium on Arab Cooperation in Scientific and Technological Research in Khartoum, in which the League of Arab States, scientific research centres in the Arab States and Arab organizations associated with research into various aspects of scientific and technological research in Arab States will participate, and to submit the recommendations of the symposium to the Economic and Social Council for the preparation of a report to be presented to the next ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

(Summit resolution 18/355, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The Joint Ministerial Conference on the Millennium Development Goals and the Arab Declaration on the Millennium Development Goals

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied resolutions 473 and 492 of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, the resolution of the Joint Ministerial Conference of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Ministers of Planning and the Arab declaration on monitoring implementation of the Millennium Development Goals,

Recalling resolutions 238, 239 and 240 (Beirut, 28 March 2002) of the 14th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States,

Resolves

1. To affirm the Arab declaration on monitoring implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;

2. To call upon the ministerial councils and specialized Arab organizations to strive to implement the Arab declaration on monitoring implementation of the

Millennium Development Goals and coordinate efforts in this regard with the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs.

(Summit resolution 18/356, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The Charter of Ethics and Rules for Social Work

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied resolution 495 of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and the Charter of Ethics and Rules for Social Work,

Resolves

1. To affirm the principles of the Charter of Ethics and Rules for Social Work approved by the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs;

2. To call upon the concerned Arab ministerial councils to implement the Charter of Ethics and Rules for Social Work in their respective areas of activity and competence.

(Summit resolution 18/357, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The avian flu epidemic

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Expressing concern at the danger posed by the avian flu epidemic and consequent impact upon health, society and the economy and the importance of the concerned bodies in the Arab States taking measures essential to protect against the spread of the avian flu epidemic,

In order to activate early warning and disease monitoring systems and exchange information on the spread of infection,

Affirming the need to draw up plans and programmes to ensure the protection of people and livestock against the epidemic,

Resolves

1. To charge the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to call upon the Council of Arab Ministers of Health and members of the General Council of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (the Arab Ministers of Agriculture) to convene a joint meeting at the earliest opportunity in order to take the measures necessary to combat avian flu and to coordinate with specialized regional and international organizations in this regard;

2. To call upon scientific research centres (pharmaceutical, medical and drug companies) in the Arab States and Arab scientists to intensify efforts to finding vaccines and drugs to protect against and treat this disease;

3. To commission the Secretariat-General to submit a report to the next session of the Economic and Social Council on developments, the measures taken to combat the disease and the measures agreed by the joint meeting of the Arab Ministers of Health and Ministers of Agriculture.

(Summit resolution 18/358, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Financial and administrative issues

The financial position of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Having studied the memorandum of the Secretariat-General and the report of the Secretary-General on Joint Arab Action,

Pursuant to resolution 321 (23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States,

Resolves

1. To reaffirm the commitment of Member States to implement resolution 321 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States on the financial position of the Secretariat-General;

2. To call upon the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to pay its financial obligations to the Secretariat-General budget for 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, the uncontested arrears and proportion of reserves in implementation of resolution 321 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States and, likewise, to make available the financial approvals for follow-up of resolution 297 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session on the study of the ideas of the Leader of the Libyan Revolution.

(Summit resolution 18/359, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Expression of gratitude and appreciation to the Republic of the Sudan for hosting the 18th ordinary session of the Summit in Khartoum

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

In appreciation of the generous hosting by the Republic of Sudan of the proceedings of the 18th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States at summit level and its estimable efforts in preparing and organizing the work of this session,

Resolves

1. To extend sincere greetings and thanks to the President, Government and people of the Republic of the Sudan for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to the delegations participating in the Arab Summit;

2. To express deep gratitude and recognition to His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan for his great effort in making available the opportunities for holding the conference and the success of its proceedings.

(Summit resolution 18/360, adopted on 29 March 2006)

Venue and date of the 19th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level,

Pursuant to the annex to the Charter on the mechanism for convening the regular, ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, Pursuant to article 4, paragraph (a) of the Annex to the Charter on the mechanism for convening the regular session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, stipulating, "Ordinary sessions of the Council at summit level shall be held at the headquarters of the League in Cairo. If it so wishes, the state that holds the Presidency of the Summit may move to host it",

Pursuant to the submission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

Resolves

To convene the 19th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States at summit level under the presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the state in which the headquarters of the League are located, in March 2007.

(Summit resolution 18/361, adopted on 29 March 2006)

The Khartoum Declaration

We, the Kings, Presidents and Emirs of the Arab States, assembling as the League of Arab States at summit level (18th ordinary session) in Khartoum, capital of the Republic of the Sudan on the 28th and 29th days of March 2006,

Drawing inspiration from the resolutions of the Arab Summit in Khartoum (1967) and of the Summits preceding and following, of which the last was the Algiers Summit, that expressed concern for the unity and coordination of Arab ranks and collective action and their cleansing of all defects,

Having conducted a comprehensive assessment and thorough study of the circumstances of the Arab situation, Arab relations, the conditions through which the Arab nation is passing, the threats facing Arab national security and the imminent dangers to the security and stability of the Middle East,

In view of the changes in the international order and the enormous challenges that current upheavals represent to the Arab regional order,

Affirming our commitment to the principles and goals of the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Charter of the United Nations and our pan-Arab responsibilities to enhance and strengthen the bonds of Arab relations,

Commending the positive atmosphere in which the work of the proceedings of the Summit have been conducted, strengthening Arab solidarity and advancing the course of Joint Arab Action,

Declare the following:

- Our full commitment to unity of destiny and the goal of the Arab nation, our pride in its values and traditions, firmly-rooted in liberty and independence, our defence of its national sovereignty and security and our upholding of Arab solidarity as a pan-Arab goal, means and purpose.
- We renew our commitment to the Charter of the League of Arab States and Arab agreements designed to strengthen the bonds between the Arab States and peoples, requiring that disputes be solved by peaceful means.
- We commend the efforts designed to develop Joint Arab Action and the modernization of its system energizing of its mechanisms that have been

achieved, thus enabling it to deal with developments in Arab societies and keep pace with rapid global changes.

- We appreciate the idea put forward by His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and have resolved to mandate the Council of the League at ministerial level to study the proposal to convene an Arab Consultative Summit between ordinary sessions of the Council of the League at summit level, to examine recent issues and coordinate the higher positions and policies of the Arab States.

- We affirm our endeavour to achieve Arab integration through activating the mechanisms of Joint Arab Action and implementing economic integration projects, in particular the agreement on the Greater Arab Free Trade Area.

- We call for increased Arab investment, particularly in agricultural and livestock resources and exploitation of the resources and potential of the Sudan to achieve Arab food security.

- We affirm the need for cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect between peoples and cultures and the construction of a world where openness and tolerance prevail. We note that respect for religious beliefs and sacred values is a decisive factor in building trust and bridges of friendship between nations. We express our outright rejection and absolute condemnation of the insult and slur against the Prophet Muhammad and any violation of religions, religious symbols or the values of spiritual belief and call upon the nations of the world and the United Nations to introduce laws and legislation to criminalize the violation of sacred religious values. We emphasize respect for freedom of opinion and expression without prejudice to the constants of popular religious faith.

- We affirm the need to build a culture of dialogue and an alliance between cultures and religions as a foundation for international security and peace and in the endeavour to consolidate the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. We affirm the need to work with governments and regional and international organizations to strengthen the mechanisms of interaction in order to come to know and respect the culture of the other.

- We reaffirm the centrality of the Palestinian issue and the Arab option for achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We renew our commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted at the Arab Summit in Beirut (2002), to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

- We reaffirm that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East shall only be achieved by complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, to the line of 4 June 1967, and the lands still occupied in Southern Lebanon, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem and the arrival at a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, agreed in accordance with resolution 194 of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

- We commend the exercise of democracy in Palestine and the impartiality and transparency of the legislative elections. We express our full support for the

Palestinian National Authority, its leadership and institutions in striving to preserve national unity and we call upon the international community to respect the democratic will of the Palestinian people to choose its leadership, not to interfere in its internal affairs and to reject the unilateral Israeli measures.

- We request implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the racist separation wall on occupied Palestinian land.
- We affirm our commitment to the continuing financial support of the Palestinian National Authority in accordance with the mechanism adopted at the Beirut Summit (2002) and continuing contribution to the resources of the al-Aqsa Fund and Intifada Al-Quds Fund to strengthen the Palestinian economy, reinforce its indigenous capability and disengage it from dependence on the Israeli economy.
- We express our complete solidarity with Syria in the face of sanctions imposed by United States and consider the so-called Syria Accountability Act a breach of the principles of international law and resolutions of the United Nations. We appreciate the Syrian position calling for the primacy of the language of dialogue and diplomacy as a means of understanding between States and resolving disputes between them.
- We express our solidarity with Lebanon and its sovereign right to make its own political choices within the institutions of its Constitution. We support the Lebanese national dialogue and Lebanon's unshakeable right to recover its lands still occupied by Israel. We call for the exposure and punishment of the assassins of the martyr Rafiq al-Hariri, former Prime Minister of Lebanon and his companions.
- We renew our solidarity with the Iraqi people and call for respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and independence and for non-intervention in its internal affairs. We renew our respect for its will to determine its own future and democratic choices and call for a government to be formed quickly. We condemn totally the acts of sabotage aimed at the shrines, mosques and other houses of worship in Samarra and call upon all elements of Iraqi society to uphold national unity and not allow the security and stability of the country to be undermined. We declare our appreciation of the commendable efforts of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to achieve national accord in Iraq and call upon him to continue his efforts to convene the Conference on Iraqi National Accord in Baghdad. We welcome the initiative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to hold a meeting of Iraqi religious leaders and authorities in Amman.
- To maintain, strengthen and develop fraternal Arab-Iranian relations, we call upon the Government of Iran to withdraw from the three Arab islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and restore them to the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates. We appreciate the position of the United Arab Emirates in calling for the pursuit of peaceful measures and means to recover the islands.
- We again welcome the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Republic of the Sudan and the measures taken to implement it. We call upon

all concerned regional and international parties to work to restore security and stability to the Sudan and provide aid and assistance for the reconstruction of Southern Sudan and the areas affected by war. We encourage the international community and donor nations to fulfil their undertakings to pay for the process of comprehensive development in the Sudan.

- We call upon the Sudanese parties to the peace talks on Darfur to increase their efforts to reach a final and comprehensive agreement to resolve the crisis. We affirm our continued support for and cooperation with the African Union in its endeavour to deal with the crisis and monitor the ceasefire. We affirm that the deployment of any other forces to the region shall require prior agreement from the Government of the Sudan. We affirm our resolve to increase the African Arab contingent participating in the African Union force and provide the financial and logistic support necessary for them to continue their mission.
- We welcome the positive achievements of Somali national reconciliation and call upon our brothers in Somalia to complete the building of the institutions of state, strengthen the process of reconciliation and cement the pillars of stability. We call for the prompt provision of urgent assistance to the Government of Somalia to enable it to carry out its tasks.
- We declare our support for the progress made in the national reconciliation process in the Union of Comoros and our backing for continuation of the political process, the holding of presidential elections and development efforts. We welcome the positive outcome of the Donors Conference for the Union of Comoros and call for declared commitments and undertakings to be fulfilled.
- We appeal to Member States, the organizations of Joint Arab Action, donor nations and all international organizations to provide urgent humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of those regions facing the catastrophes of drought and desertification in Niger, Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and other ravaged African regions.
- We affirm the importance of Afro-Arab cooperation, the need to activate the structures and revitalize the institutions thereof and remove obstacles in the path of positive cooperation in order to strengthen Afro-Arab relations and promote development in the Afro-Arab space. We urge intensification of efforts between the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States and the African Union Commission to convene the second Afro-Arab Summit Conference at the earliest possible opportunity.
- We express our desire to restart and invigorate Arab-European dialogue and strengthen links with the Asian countries.
- We stress the need for reform of the international order to enable the United Nations to increase its effectiveness and capability in confronting the challenges facing the world in order to ensure international peace and security. We call for expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council to enable different geographic regions and world cultures to participate more actively in management of the international order.

- We declare our condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, believing that the crimes committed by terrorist groups represent grave violations of fundamental human rights and an ongoing threat to the national security and stability of States. We call for an international conference to be convened under the auspices of the United Nations to establish a definition of terrorism, avoid confusion between terrorism and Islam and distinguish between terrorism and the right of peoples to resist occupation.

- We express our satisfaction with the continuing economic development of the Arab States and affirm the importance of increasing rates of growth, attracting national and overseas investment and maintaining economic reform policies, taking into consideration the social aspects of development.

- We affirm our desire to strengthen reciprocal economic relations with various economic groupings throughout the world and to maintain policies aimed at achieving stability on world oil markets.

- We call upon the Member States of the World Trade Organization not to impose tight conditions for the accession of the Arab States and to support the request of the League of Arab States for observer status.

- We affirm the need to devote greater attention to the development dimensions of international trade and take into account the needs of developing countries.

- We express our satisfaction with the outcome of the South American and Arab Countries Summit in May 2005 and welcome the joint meeting of the Ministers of the Economy of the two blocs to be held in Quito, Ecuador in April 2006.

- We welcome the continuing efforts of the Arab States to deepen and strengthen democratic practices and good governance and we declare our support for all national initiatives in this regard. We welcome the expansion of participation by civil society forces and organizations in modernization, development and reform efforts.

- We appeal to the international community to cooperate in strengthening efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals and eradicate poverty. Resources need to be made available and distributed fairly to ensure the attainment of all agreed internationally goals to achieve development and eliminate poverty. Financial support must be doubled, particularly to the less developed countries, special international initiatives put into operation to cancel or reduce debt and narrow the gap between the levels of economic and social development of the rich and poor countries.

- We call for support of the World Solidarity Fund to Combat Poverty and the allocation of the necessary resources to activate its role.

- We affirm the continuation of efforts aimed at ending discrimination against women, the launch of initiatives to ensure women's rights and role in society and the enactment of legislation to protect women and safeguard their position.

- We call for the necessary measures to be taken to ensure that the disabled enjoy full rights on an equal basis with the non-disabled and implementation and activation of the Arab Charter for the Disabled.

- We urge monitoring of the implementation of Arab plans and strategies for Joint Arab Social Work, in particular of the Arab Strategy to Combat Poverty, the Arab Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Arab Strategy for the Family, the Charter of Ethics and Rules for Social Work and other charters to revitalize Arab society and achieve social progress.

- We call for the strengthening of cooperation to combat infectious diseases such as avian flu.

- We affirm the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

- We affirm our determination to develop education in the Arab world and create a Higher Arab Council to examine the situation of all levels and aspects of education and to submit a report with its recommendations to the 19th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

- We resolve to support scientific and technological research, allocate the necessary financial resources, increase existing allocations and intensify cooperation among scientific and research centres in the Arab States. We call for the urgent development of scientific research in order to increase productive capacity, reinforce the ability to build an information society, close the digital gap and develop programmes for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

- We undertake to provide all forms of support to Arab cultural institutions, writers and creative artists to raise the qualitative level of Arab creative ability in all areas of culture and the arts and to provide opportunities for Arab culture to contribute to the enrichment of human culture.

- We call for youth to be enabled to take an active role in society by contributing to economic, social, cultural and political development.

- We value the efforts to reinforce ties with émigré Arab communities, the need to maintain contact and support their institutional frameworks. We call for active participation in the second US-Arab Economic Forum in Houston and other forums organized in collaboration with the Arab Diaspora.

- We extend sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for his valuable efforts and initiatives and substantial contributions during his assumption of the Presidency of the previous Summit, which bore fruit in the progress of Joint Arab Action and development of its system.

- We extend sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan for his careful management of the proceedings of the Summit and perspicacious steering of its deliberations. We express our full confidence that, under his Presidency, Joint Arab Action will witness further achievements and development for the good of the Arab nation, given his acknowledged wisdom, experience and ability. We resolve to adopt the opening address of His Excellency as an official conference document.

- We similarly express our deep gratitude to the Republic of the Sudan and its hospitable people for the warm reception, generous hospitality and masterly organization of the proceedings of the18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.
- We welcome the convening of the19th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States under the presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the state in which the headquarters of the League are situated, in March 2007.
- We likewise express our pride and appreciation at the continuing efforts of Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States in promoting Arab issues. We are confident he will continue these estimable efforts during the period of his second mandate and, too, in the monitoring of the status of development and modernization of the Joint Arab Action system.

Khartoum, 28-29 March 2006

Report of the Secretary-General on the Arab Court of Justice

- Article 19 of the Charter of the League of Arab States provides for the creation of an Arab Court of Justice.
- The extraordinary session (30 May 1990) of the League of Arab States at summit level resolved to charge the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to conclude a study of the draft Statutes of the Arab Court of Justice for submission to the forthcoming conference at summit level.
- The Arab summit conference in Cairo (1996) resolved in principle to establish the Arab Court of Justice and charged Arab leaders and Ministers of Foreign Affairs with completion of the final draft of its Statutes.
- Since then, and after completion of the final draft by the legal committee, the draft Statutes of the Court have been submitted periodically to the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level and the Council has resolved on a number of occasions to postpone consideration of the draft to the following session. The last such resolution was issued at the 112th session (13 September 1999), when the Council resolved to consider the draft at the next session, to be determined by consultation and agreement between Member States and the Secretariat-General, and to charge the Secretary-General with liaison in this regard.
- The 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Algiers) adopted resolution 294 stipulating that, at the request of the Secretary-General, specialized committees with representatives from the Member States were to be formed to continue consideration of the projected Arab Court of Justice and Arab Security Council.
- The Secretariat-General invited the special committee consisting of all Member States and concerned with studying the draft Statutes of the Arab Court of Justice to meet at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General in November 2005 to discuss the draft Statutes. Despite differing points of view, agreement was reached on submitting the draft to the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level, with reservations noted on three articles.

Discussion of the subject of the Arab Court of Justice at the ministerial meeting preparatory to the 18th Summit

When the subject was discussed at the meeting of Foreign Ministers preparatory to the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Khartoum, fundamentally differing points of view emerged, not only in regard to certain clauses in the Statutes but also as to the extent of the usefulness of the idea of the Court itself and whether or not it is really needed in the new Arab order. On this basis, the Sultanate of Oman called for consideration of the mechanism of a council of arbitration system or the like, as an alternative to the Court, the Republic of Yemen backed non-creation of the Court, while several States, such as Lebanon and Kuwait, proposed postponing consideration of the matter. Algeria, however, held the view that the subject was ready for decision, with the exception of three clauses that could be settled at the ordinary session. For my part, I have observed a lack of general support for the proposal to establish the Court and a lack of enthusiasm for the idea, albeit for different reasons and from a limited number of Member State delegations.

Address of His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, to the opening session

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace be upon you.

Khartoum, the capital of the Sudan and, indeed, of the entire Sudanese people, is overjoyed to receive you today, as cherished brothers and blessed comrades, in the land of the Sudan, this great homeland which greets your arrival and is proud to welcome you. You honour its noble land with this distinguished gathering, to which our masses look, regarding you as the refuge of hope and expectation and the helmsmen who will steer them toward the realization of their hopes and achievement of the goals of our Arab nation, its causes victorious and its rights accorded justice.

With this distinguished assembly, you have given us a splendid likeness of four decades ago when the Khartoum Summit of 1967 bore glad tidings to the Arab nation, fortified its steadfastness and endowed it with the sure certainty that its might and invincibility lay in that gathering of unity and solidarity.

That Summit was held in very different circumstances from those in which we live today and succeeded, despite those dreadful circumstances, in restoring balance to the Arab nation. We meet today in the same place and in circumstances no less menacing, indeed in conditions even more complicated. I am certain that, to understand and grasp these, we shall be called upon to bring reason to bear, until we find the cure for every sickness. We can but depart this conference resolved upon the common good, agreed upon a shared interest. However, before proceeding to review the issues that fill the agenda of this gathering, accept my apologies for performing two necessary duties. The first of these is to ask for God's mercy upon the two great leaders lost to the nation since the last Summit: the Servant of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. I likewise do not fail to ask for God's mercy upon the soul of Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. With their passing, the Arab nation has lost three of the pillars of its unity but, may God be praised, they have left behind them mature and wise leaders, tested by experience and fortified by events.

My second duty is to offer deserved congratulations and thanks to His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. I congratulate him on his splendid recovery from illness and thank him for his estimable efforts during his time at the helm of Arab action, carried out with customary prudence and wisdom, that produced tangible achievements, particularly in the institutional aspect of the Joint Arab Action system. I must also welcome His Excellency Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, participating for the first time in the Arab Summit.

I trust that you will also permit me to welcome, in the name of you all, our esteemed guest, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey, as well as the representatives of brotherly and friendly regional and international organizations. I take the opportunity, too, to extend gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, for his valuable contribution and continuing efforts to renovate our common home. For the Arab League is our common home and we have an obligation to reinforce its structure and strengthen its supports lest we seek shelter in a house without foundation.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As this Summit meets in Khartoum, our Arab nation faces precarious internal circumstances, rapid international changes and attacks, both covert and overt, targeting its identity and cohesion of its homelands. In facing all these challenges, we shall only succeed by removing the veil of inattention from our eyes and proceeding to address them with calm intellect. For intellect alone – and God, eternal, is our support – compels the truth. We do this, brothers, on the basis of our responsibility to the Arab nation in order to strengthen Arab solidarity, safeguard the nation's honour, preserve its security and realize the legitimate aspirations of its homelands for progress, development and prosperity and of its people for freedom and democracy.

It is a cause for hope that as this Summit is being held, we feel satisfaction at what has been achieved since our last meeting. Having developed and modernized the Joint Arab Action system and set in motion its mechanisms to keep pace with rapid international developments, the Interim Arab Parliament and the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Resolutions were established, the proposals to amend the rules of voting were completed, the substantive and procedural issues pertaining to resolutions were determined and the Statutes of the Arab Court of Justice and Arab Security Council were drafted. Each of these topics shall be considered by your Summit, with the aim of advancing and developing Joint Arab Action. We express our great satisfaction at the course of modernization, development and reform that has pervaded the Arab world within the framework of the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity, and we are confident that such reform will not issue from us as exoneration or in response to dictates from abroad. Rather, it emanates from our consciousness of the necessity and priority of reform. We know best the character, weaknesses and needs of our people. As such, we have agreed that development, modernization and reform shall be consistent with our faith and cultural heritage, in accordance with the circumstances of each state and at a pace appropriate to these circumstances, whether economic, social or political. We must also be fully aware of where the world as a whole is heading in terms of political, administrative and economic reform and the strengthening of democracy and human rights. This, too, is an area into which we shall enter boldly to realize the political, economic and cultural demands of our societies. And we shall do so of our own free will, removed from any external pressures that do not serve our interests, aspirations and components of our identity, for the man who humbles himself before another shall be dishonoured and he who accepts to be led shall go astray.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Palestinian issue will continue to be of crucial concern to our nation. The liberation of the occupied lands, return of the refugees and establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem will remain a goal from which there is no retreat. There is no dispute that our nation seeks a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, as proclaimed by international legality in accordance with successive resolutions. Our nation has expressed clearly, for the entire world to hear, its full commitment to resolutions 242, 338 and 194 of the United Nations and acceptance of the principle of land for peace. We appeal today to the international community to assume its responsibility to compel Israel to submit to the relevant international resolutions, respond to Arab calls for peace, the principles of international law and resolutions of international legality, to cease the use of violence against the Palestinian people with methods that ended with the passing of the era of racial discrimination, to end its persistent use of methods of international terrorism as reflected in the policies of political assassinations, demolition of houses, the bulldozing of land, incarceration of thousands in Israeli jails, settlement building and construction of the separation wall. The policy to which Israel adheres, characterized by disregard for the implementation of all international resolutions, is a grave threat to our times in that it aims to define and draw borders unilaterally, in contempt of international organizations and in defiance of the will of the international community. The heroic Palestinian people, however, have confirmed their eminent ability to exercise their democratic rights, despite the arrogance and oppression of the occupation and its inhuman practices. We honour this valiant people and reaffirm our full support for them, their National Authority and the institutions they have chosen of their own accord. We call upon the international community to respect the will and the choices of the Palestinian people and to assume its responsibility for supporting the Palestinian Government that has come to power through free and fair elections, as witnessed by the international monitors.

At this point we must pause to welcome and commend the Palestinian legislative elections that recently took place and in which the Palestinian people confirmed their ability to practice their democratic rights in the worst of circumstances and darkest of times. There is no doubt that the first lesson Israel must draw from the outcome of these elections is the Palestinian rejection of the slow pace of negotiations, not because of stubbornness on their part but because of the contempt of the Government of Israel for every promise it has made. I might add that it is our sincere hope that the wounds shall heal and differences be reduced until all resistance forces in Palestine unite within a single crucible, if not a single melting pot, with specific national goals. Resistance in pursuit of national goals is an honour and a duty.

From this rostrum, I must call upon the international community and the Quartet in particular, to double its efforts to compel Israel to respond to the repeated Arab calls for peace, chief among which are the Beirut resolutions, to desist from its repression of the sons and daughters of Palestine, to abandon its savage practices, permitted by neither religion nor custom, such as assassination, house demolition, the bulldozing of farms and the continuing construction of settlements and the separation wall, and to engage with the Road Map as the single determiner of the course of negotiations, not as a piece of paper to be folded away when Israel wants or to be read in the selective manner it wishes.

We follow, too, with considerable anxiety and distress, developments in the situation in Iraq and ask God to enable the Iraqi leadership to move beyond these conditions, which please only the enemy and delight none but the malicious. The people of Iraq deserve stability, growth and prosperity but this is only achievable through more and more dialogue, dialogue that may stop for breath but still debate goes on until God reconciles all and opens their hearts to the truth. One almost sees behind the targeting of innocent civilians and destruction of shrines, holy places and mosques a conspiracy from outside Iraq but the people of Iraq are capable of confounding the conspirators and preserving their homeland from contending regional and international forces.

On this occasion, we reaffirm our welcome of the initiative of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to convene the Conference on Iraqi National Accord. We wish it success and hope that it will produce an outcome that returns security and stability to the country, enabling Iraq to rejoin the Arab fold strong and ready to play its customary role among brothers. For without Iraq, the Arab nation is the poorer.

The duty of solidarity requires us to turn our eyes toward Syria and Lebanon. We stand beside them as one in the face of the pressures of unjust legal fabrications, such as the so-called Syria Accountability Act, to which Syria is being subjected. We stand with Lebanon in defence of its unique political and religious mosaic, a Lebanon acting with free will and independent resolve. We are in full solidarity with both in the face of repeated Israeli aggression and in support of their political, economic and security stability.

In the Gulf, we reaffirm our support for the wise and judicious stance adopted by the United Arab Emirates since the era of Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, its sagacious leader and wise man of the Arabs, to arrive at a peaceful resolution of the issue of the three islands, either through direct dialogue or international arbitration. On the basis of our desire to maintain fraternal cooperation among the Islamic states, we hope that a positive reaction from the Islamic Republic of Iran to this stance will help to achieve peace and security in the region.

Last year saw positive developments in Somali reconciliation, principally the Aden Declaration signed under the generous auspices of His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen. We are grateful to the Yemeni President for his successful efforts and welcome the positive development achieved by him. We hope that our brothers in Somalia will be able to complete the building of state institutions, strengthen accord between the various groups and secure the foundations of stability and security in their nation so that Somalia may enter into a period of growth, leaving behind forever one of the most terrible wars in our region. As the reconstruction of Somalia will require enormous resources, far beyond the capacity of the Somali Government, we appeal from this rostrum to our brother Arabs and the international community to give in support of that long-suffering people.

We must also not fail to declare our support for the positive developments in the Union of the Comoros, particularly in relation to the ongoing implementation of the Moroni Agreement for national reconciliation. We welcome the positive outcome of the Donors Conference for the Union of Comoros, held in the Republic of Mauritius in December last year, and we all hope that donors will expedite provision of the financial resources necessary for the development of the Union of the Comoros.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our world today is at a crossroads and a parting of the ways. One road leads to the good of our nation, while the other will lead us to inevitable fragmentation and disarray. At the beginning of my speech, I referred to the unremitting international changes, manufactured discord and mischief targeting our homelands. These place a heavy burden on our shoulders and require that us to work creatively and assiduously and strive wisely and unceasingly to adjust to the demands of change, whether in terms of the direction in which economic globalization is heading, the demands of the systems and institutions of international trade or the economic, cultural, social and administrative manifestations of the telecommunications and information revolution. This is a battle we cannot avoid. To fight it, there are only the weapons of science and knowledge and the subjection of all our nation's scientific and human powers to achieving the goal. Brothers, most battles are lost when the army retreats as the opponent advances or where battle is joined with broken weapons. We have no alternative but to march boldly into the battle of intellectual modernization and development, for by scientific knowledge alone shall we fathom the depths of these changes, grasp their wide-ranging effects and ensure our conscious integration into a world whose features take shape with each new day.

The need for change that we see before us, as much as demanding we strengthen our unity and solidarity and overcome our differences to protect our interests and national security, requires us to devote our natural and human resources and abilities to emancipation from the yoke of backwardness. In this regard, it is important to accelerate the steps toward economic integration on the basis of a precise strategy, inspired by our needs and aspirations. It is regrettable, for example, that most of the enlightened ideas and ambitious programs announced within the framework of the League of Arab States, particularly since the Oman Summit on Arab food security, are still locked in the files. The implementation of these programs would have guaranteed the Arab nation 80% of its food requirements. Has the time not come, Brothers, for us to direct all our energies toward making such plans a reality, particularly in such diverse areas as trade and investment, the economy, sustainable development and food security? Is it not time for us to pull together to remove the obstacles facing inter-Arab trade, economic liberalization within the framework of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area or the development of transport and power links between Arab States? Brothers, it is action, not words that will achieve this. Accordingly, we sincerely hope that this conference will adopt resolutions in support of Arab economic integration and remove the obstacles in its path, in response to the needs and aspirations of our societies.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Khartoum Summit of four decades ago became known as "the Summit of the three no's". I do not think we have gathered today to affirm these "no's" or replace them with "yes's" to annul them. The basis of our policy remains and the path to moving beyond our "no's" has been recognized since the Beirut Summit. We are not meeting today to recycle old resolutions after they have been polished and shined.

However, if we must summarize the results of our Summits in words of negation or affirmation then, Brothers, let this Summit be the Summit of the three "no's" *and* the three "yes's". Let us say "no" to whoever denies the democratic choice of the Palestinian people, "no" to punishing the Palestinian people for practising its right to choose who shall govern and "no" to submission and deference to Israel's breach of every promise made in front of the world, every document it has wilfully manipulated and every undertaking it has made. Then, Brothers, we say "yes", firstly to completing the building of our pan-Arab institutions, modernizing our working methods and arranging our internal affairs of our own accord, in line with the values of governance agreed on by all mankind. Secondly, it is the Summit that says "yes" to Arab economic integration, which will bring to bear the abundant resources that God has bestowed upon the nation to build or rebuild our homelands by developing our agriculture so we are not forced to procure food from the furthest corners of the world, by modernizing our industry so that our products do not fail against those of other countries, some of which are known as "tigers" but do not possess our natural and human resources, and by liberalizing our trade through opening up our markets to one another. Thirdly, it is the Summit that says "yes" to giving scientific research the place it deserves in our societies, as a strategic approach aimed at the repatriation and sustainability of scientific research and the production and dissemination of knowledge. If the abundance of oil in the 1970s was an effective weapon in our political battle, let the good that God has bestowed upon us with the current rise in oil revenues permit the development of science, technology and information technology in each of our homelands and be a spur to us all to allocate a certain percentage of our annual budgets to the development of scientific research. Is it not cause for regret that total, official budget allocations for scientific research in our countries do not amount to the allocation of one American university, that of the University of California at Berkeley? Does it not cause even greater regret that Israel's allocation for scientific research is ten times that of those Arab countries that spend the most in this area? Our belief in the enormous importance of scientific research in promoting growth and development and of information technology to the development of industry, administration and organization has led us to call for the inclusion of this subject on the Summit agenda. You have in front of you the judicious recommendations drafted by the League's Economic and Social Council on means of reaching this objective and the stages through which we must pass to achieve our goals of the modernization and development of the Arab nation through science. We hope that this Summit will issue a resolution in support of these recommendations.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Summit coincides with the 50th anniversary of the independence of our country. We appreciate the honour you have shown by sharing this occasion with the Sudanese people and we thank the brother country of Djibouti for giving us the opportunity to host this Summit to coincide with such a great national event.

The Arab Summit meets in Khartoum at a time when, by the grace of God, peace prevails in our country. A devastating war that lasted twenty years in the south of the land beloved of us all has ended. There is no doubt that the peace achieved in the Sudan by the determination of its people and support of its friends and brothers spurs the endeavour to move forward and look toward the promising future to which the Sudanese people aspire, enabling them to build a nation that embraces them all, based on justice, brotherhood and equality.

I am aware that you are men with distaste for expressions of excessive gratitude but I believe I have a duty to praise you all for your contributions to strengthening the foundations of peace through building and reconstruction, whether by bilateral agreement, via the League of Arab States or on the part of Arab investors. I am especially grateful to the Arab League for its realization, before the advent of peace, of the importance of reconstruction of the Southern Sudan and other war-torn regions of the country and note, in particular, the resolutions of the Tunis and Algiers Summits on support for peace, development and unity in our country. I am moved by the hope that our Arab brothers will expedite contributions to the Arab Fund for Support of Sudan to develop the south of the country and the war-torn regions. We also urge the Arab League to convene the fourth Coordination Meeting for Southern Sudan Development and Investment in the course of this year, with the participation of Arab States and finance institutions, to coordinate Arab investments in Southern Sudan, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and services. We likewise hope that the Arab States concerned shall address the subject of outstanding Sudanese debt, as external debt represents one of the greatest obstacles to our development and reconstruction efforts in the Southern Sudan and indeed, in the entire country.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace in the Sudan shall not be complete until war has come to an end in another beloved part of the homeland: Darfur. Peace in Darfur is the main priority from the perspective of our national responsibility and duty that peace prevail in all regions of the Sudan and our desire to extend security and stability throughout the country. Talks are taking place with the armed opposition groups with open heart and mind and we sincerely hope that those who have taken up arms will actively respond and the current round of negotiations will arrive at a just and comprehensive peace in Darfur. You have, no doubt, been following the latest attempts to deploy international forces to the Darfur region under the pretext that the African Union troops are unable to continue their mission there. The African Union has now extended the mission of its forces in the Sudan for a further six months, concluding at the end of September 2006. We hope that, within that time, we shall put the problem of Darfur behind us forever. The African Union forces, with the practical experience and expertise acquired in resolving disputes in Africa, are perfectly capable of undertaking the task without international intervention. Accordingly, we renew our call to the international community and our Arab and African brothers to provide the necessary funding for these forces and increase the participation of the armies of the African Arab States to the level required to enable the mission to continue. Here I offer public praise for the estimable efforts of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi and His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak for coordinating the supply of assistance to the African Union forces on both the Arab and the African levels and for their considerable efforts through the African Quintet.

I especially commend the efforts of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi in calming the situation between Chad and the Sudan and we affirm our resolute commitment to the Tripoli Declaration and our desire to implement its resolutions.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Sudan, by virtue of its distinctive geographic position and ethnic composition, is the point at which the Arab and African worlds meet. We believe it is appropriate that this Arab Summit be held in Khartoum, as a new point of departure for Afro-Arab cooperation given the suffocating international changes and oppressive unilateral hegemony, particularly on the part of one country that believes itself to be the only one on the face of the earth and under the shade of the sky. Faced with these changes casting their dark shadow across the world, especially across the countries of the Third World, we in the Third World have no choice but to stand shoulder to shoulder and work hand in hand to secure our legitimate rights and defend our rightful interests. Our awareness of a self-evident truth namely, the struggle for survival has prompted us toward solidarity within a number of organizations above the merely regional and continental. There is the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the South Centre, of which we are all active members. On the African and Asian continents, Afro-Arab cooperation represents the cornerstone of this cooperation and solidarity of an international nature. As such, our strategic view of Afro-Arab cooperation must be as the cornerstone of a comprehensive system of cooperation. The revitalization of the course of this cooperation and removal of obstacles in its path will not only contribute to the development of socio-economic conditions in both the Arab and African regions, with the consequent benefit to both peoples, but also represent a major boost to international cooperation between the nations of the South. It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the Sudan will host the discussion forum you proposed at your last meeting on perspectives on Afro-Arab cooperation. I am also gratified by the forum's orientation toward putting in place a strategy plan and action programs derived from this that are not restricted solely to economic and development matters but go beyond these to issues of joint security, culture, youth activities, the media and environmental protection.

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This speech would be incomplete without reference to two dangers that threaten our homelands. The first of these is international terrorism and the second, weapons of mass destruction. It would also be incomplete without reference to a matter that occupies us all, as States wishing to play their full and rightful role.

Terrorism in all its forms aims at undermining the structures, capacity and achievements of societies and represents an ongoing threat to the security and stability of nations, inflicting grievous damage on their economic and social development. As such, we declare our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and call for the necessary measures to be taken to combat and eradicate it. This is fully consistent with the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and your affirmation in the Algiers Declaration. At the same time, we remember the call made in that declaration for an international conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nation to establish an objective definition of terrorism that does not confuse Islam with terrorism and distinguishes between terrorism and the right of peoples to resist occupation. We are a nation of moderation and the extent of justice is proportional to the level of moderation. The Prophet said, "The best lies in moderation, the worst is at the extremes." I cannot let this opportunity pass without condemning the terrorism to which three of our countries have been subjected since the time of our last meeting: the Arab Republic of Egypt at Sharm al-Sheikh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the oil installations in the Eastern Province and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Amman. Each of these outrages against innocent people and their property was an act of evil and of shame. But evil shall befall its perpetrator and shame shall cleave to the doer.

The second danger, Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, is related to the need to make the Middle East an area free from nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction in order to promote the security and safety of its people and the health of its natural environment. Here there must be no distinction between States, with strictures applied in one case and disregard in another. Accordingly, we urge the nations of the international community to be honest with themselves and compel Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and open its nuclear installations to inspection.

The matter that occupies us all, above other concerns, is the place of the Arabs in the international order. We are insistent in calling for reform of the United Nations, not only for it to become more competent in the performance of its tasks but also to spread democracy throughout its organization. One aspect of this is enlargement of the membership of the Security Council, allowing different geographic regions to participate in management of the international system, achieve justice, fairness and transparency and end the politics of hegemony. We are confident that the Arab member, Qatar, will do its utmost to reflect the Arab point of view during its term of membership of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I say that our strength shall always remain in our unity, a unity in whose shadow we are shaded and under which we shelter. We cleave to its cord so our flock may be safe and the Arab nation occupy its rightful place beneath the sun. I ask God to grant success to us all, for He is the giver of victory. Peace be upon you all.

Address of His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, to the opening session

Mr. President, Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir
Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It pleases me greatly that the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level is meeting in the Sudan as it celebrates the 50th anniversary of its independence. This is a meeting with special significance, for here where races and cultures meet and interact, a peace agreement has ended a devastating civil war with a decisive choice for unity for the sake of a new Sudan. Here lie the problems of development and horizons of prosperity and here, too, there are problems of insurgency and unrest, and a crisis of dimensions such as those in Darfur.

At the same time, convening the Arab Summit in the Horn of Africa's largest state is a clear indication of the special ties that bind the Arab world with the countries of the Horn and the whole of Africa. The Arab and African worlds are intertwined, like twins; there is no antagonism between them, only complementariness, cooperation and mutual understanding. Their problems are alike, the challenges similar and the path toward the future is the same. Thus the course of Afro-Arab brotherhood must be based upon practical and well-developed foundations in the interests of two old brothers indeed, two twins: Africa and the Arab world. With this Summit, an extensive program of cooperation between the African Union and the League of Arab States will be launched.

Here, I join with Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the African Union Commission in congratulating the entire Sudan on this momentous day, confident in its Presidency of the Arab Summit and capacity to shoulder its responsibilities during the Arab year that begins this day. I offer thanks for the generous hospitality and welcome all guests of the Summit.

Delighted to see the Sudan holding the Presidency of the Arab Summit, I was equally delighted to work with the Algerian Presidency of the 17th Summit, a confident leadership believing in the importance of Joint Arab Action, which it works at all times and in every sphere to monitor and support. It is a leadership with a powerful ability to represent all the Arabs at international level. Here, I salute President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, wishing him every success in his leadership of the youthful Algeria and hoping he enjoys vitality and the very best of health.

In the midst of this great event, permit me to salute the memory of the great leaders we have lost in the course of last year: the Servant of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, Sheikh Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait and Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. May God have mercy on them and may they rest in peace. I also salute the Memory of Dr. John Garang, First-Vice President of the Republic of the Sudan and partner for peace in the Sudan; with his death, we have lost an outstanding personality who played an historic role in creating peace in the Sudan.

Mr. President,
Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,

Five years have passed since you appointed me Secretary-General of the League of Arab States in March 2001, in Amman. Those five years have been filled with momentous events and developments that have left their mark upon the Middle East and the Arab world especially. The effects of many of them have been negative but have, nevertheless, confirmed the importance of our steady course toward change, development and modernization, as you resolved at the Tunis Summit of 2004, as well as the importance of standing as one to face the onslaught that has adopted the clash of civilizations as a launching pad for insult and accusation and basis for the exercise of force, extremes of arrogance and contempt, double standards and the violation of human rights (a subject which has become like a case of the pot calling the kettle black). You are well aware of the truth of this and made your position clear in the course of extensive discussions in Algiers at this time last year.

I have submitted to Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses a detailed report on the achievements of Joint Arab Action and the challenges it faces, to enable you to review the state of the collective Arab path during the last five years. It is a full statement of account that takes as its starting point the resolution you adopted in Amman, in which you requested the Secretary-General to take the measures necessary to modernize and develop the systems of the League of Arab States, bringing them into line with the goals of Joint Arab Action and enabling the League and institutions of Joint Arab Action to keep abreast of pan-Arab demands and keep pace with developments on the regional and international fronts.

Exerting my utmost with the help of a small team of dedicated staff, several specialists and a lack of funds that astonished observers, I undertook the task with a determination derived from a belief, a vision and consciousness of the value and benefit of the joint Arab interest and from the honour of the assignment, on the basis of your resolutions, that placed this hard and heavy burden on my shoulders in circumstances you are well aware of.

The League of Arab States has become a full partner of international and regional organizations and other global assemblies, invited to their forums and participating in their consultations and studies. On behalf of the Arab order, it expresses its vision of the future of the region and manner of facing the problems and challenges presented by the international situation. It contributes to proposals relating to the future of the international situation and that of the United Nations system. The League has become part of the global dialogue on the clash of civilizations or, if you will, the dialogue of civilizations. It is a powerful defender of the Arab position and an active participant in shaping the Islamic one. On this occasion, it pleases me to welcome Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey and one of the founders of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. I welcome, too, Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

The League has opened up new paths for engaging with the Arab Diaspora, particularly the Arab-American community, in circumstances that are very difficult for both them and us. The US-Arab Economic forum in Detroit was attended and followed by thousands of Arab-Americans and its value and significance were appreciated by the US Administration, after which a constructive dialogue developed between the League, the community and the Administration that is still continuing. It bore fruit in the call for a second round to be held this year in Houston with the same tripartite participation.

Within the same framework, we have been invited to an Arab-European conference on the status of mutual understanding to be held at L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris this coming April, in which European communities of Arab origin will participate. It is an endeavour undertaken by the League, the Arab-European Chambers of Commerce and L'Institut du Monde Arabe. We shall also receive a large number of representatives and members of the Arab Diaspora in Latin America at the headquarters of the League in June, at a conference that will bring together Latin American Arab communities to discuss their situation and our mutual relations. This will be followed by similar endeavours on other continents and locations worldwide, where overseas Arab interests and problems are involved.

This has been accompanied by initiatives involving Asia and Africa: the first South American and Arab Countries Summit took place, the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum has been very active and there has been an Arab-Japanese Dialogue Forum and an increasing presence in Africa.

As regards structural development, the creation of the Interim Arab Parliament, established by your resolution in Algiers, has had a powerful impact on the construction of the new Arab order, as an expression of the activation of democracy and application of the resolve you affirmed in the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity and the Document of Development and Modernization to deepen the bases of democracy, continue the comprehensive reform measures in all areas, reinforce the spirit of Arab citizenship, expand the sphere of participation in public life and support the means for responsible freedom of expression.

A new relationship has been established between the League and Arab civil society, in accordance with your resolution in Tunis to open the doors to the participation of Arab civil society organizations in activating and developing Joint Arab Action.

In addition, the voting systems in the administrative apparatus of the League of Arab States have been developed to operate on the basis of majority vote in the absence of consensus. The establishment of the Arab Council for Peace and Security is now to be put before you and we hope that a resolution will be adopted during this session.

In the economic sphere, the work of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area has begun, with the participation of seventeen Member States. Negotiations on the liberalization of the trade in services have also commenced, with the participation of ten Member States. A preliminary study on the setting up of an Arab Customs Union has begun and may be completed within the next ten years, more or less, depending upon regional and global economic developments.

In social affairs, to give one example, you set out an Arab Strategy for the Family at the Algiers Summit, which has been a success by all international standards and welcomed and acknowledged by regional and international organizations, chief among them the United Nations. At the Tunis Summit, you issued the Arab Charter on Human Rights which, it is hoped, will soon be ratified. Progress continues, whether in relation to women, youth, children or those with special needs, in dealing with natural and man-made disasters or in confronting international terrorism and its effects.

In cultural issues, after studying the reports of the United Nations Development Programme on the deficiencies from which Arab societies suffer, particularly the knowledge deficit, the League has taken action in more than one direction and area. There is no doubt that a structural deficiency exists in Arab societies, to which I have referred in my previous reports, particularly those dealing with education, the knowledge deficit and scientific research.

The time has come for us to deal with the fact of the backwardness of education in the Arab world. In general, it is incapable of producing scientists and even of producing educated individuals. Our graduates are unable to deal with the world of today, so how will they be able to deal with the world of tomorrow, in an era of rapid development and continuous modernization and change?

In this context, I propose that you agree to establish a high level Arab council for a limited term to review all levels of education in the Arab world, together with their development and modernization. The term of this council should be one year, with a report to be submitted to the next Summit. I shall consult on this matter and follow up activity with the relevant agencies of Joint Arab Action.

As regards scientific research, which is one of the areas neglected by Joint Arab Action, an important proposal from the Economic and Social Council will be put before you to address this issue, pursuant to an initiative from the Republic of Sudan, as President Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir has just kindly explained.

In the area of scientific research and scientific progress, I am minded to call from this rostrum and in front of this honourable gathering, for the speedy and enthusiastic entry of the Arabs into the world of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This is a legal right guaranteed to Member States by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which underpins this basic right and requires that we – as others have done – make use of it to the fullest extent in support of the Arab scientific base and direct it toward serving society and meeting its increasing needs for water, power, etc.

Mr. President,
Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,

The Arab world today is facing violent storms, in Palestine and Iraq, in Somalia and the Sudan, between Syria and Lebanon and also in relation to the nuclear issue in the region. The region is standing on a hot tin roof, as they say, buffeted by currents and winds. It frequently suffers from despair and sometimes clings to hope – hope for a different future, where it lies on the same level as other peoples who have achieved a high degree of political, economic, social and scientific progress.

The problems of regional security, violated by extremist terrorism and ripped apart by policies that bear the mark of double standards, are almost destroying the region by storm. This august Summit must consider the matter and take such resolutions as it sees fit. It is impermissible and impossible for circles to be draw around the region in which we form the majority, while there is political activity going on, involving conclaves, negotiations or deals where the intention is, perhaps, to exclude or marginalize us. Accordingly, I call upon the Arab States to meet in their various councils to study this new situation and define an Arab stance.

Iraq is a country with a key role to play in the Arab world but it is suffering from a high level of political and religious violence that has led to a dangerously chaotic situation requiring that we, this Summit, support the political process in Iraq. However, this can only succeed within a framework of national accord and on the basis that Iraq is a nation of its entire people, without discrimination on religious, sectarian or ethnic grounds. No decisions can be made on Iraq without the consent of Iraqi popular opinion and the involvement of the Arabs and Arab opinion for without these the results will be deficient and inadequate. In all cases, we must act and take a stance on the outcome of such deals, if concluded. It is essential that the Arabs participate in the discussion on the current situation, which threatens regional security. No doubt your discussions and resolutions today will shed significant light on the Arab position and revitalize its dynamic vis-à-vis current developments in Iraq and the surrounding region.

The Conference on Iraqi National Accord is imminent, requiring the ground to be prepared in advance by means of preliminary meetings involving representatives of the various political, religious and tribal forces to move toward a national alliance and, indeed, national unity. We hope that the composition of the new Iraqi Government will reflect this and can take Iraq forward to a new phase of future stability. The first of these preliminary meetings will be held under the auspices of His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, in the second half of this coming April.

The on-going fighting and killing and the slide, or push, toward sectarian and factional strife is a prescription for disaster from which no party will emerge the winner or the loser and the victim will be the whole of Iraq. Iraq's future progress depends first of all upon respect for the collective national interests of the country and upon Iraq being a nation of all its people, with its own identity, ties and commitments to the Arab world and the region as a whole, as a major, sovereign, independent state.

In Palestine, it seems that matters are getting worse. The peace process is in retreat. In fact, it has lost its way and the occupation persists with its colonial policies. We had hoped that the opportunity to form new governments in both Palestine and Israel might have been a starting point to raise the peace process from its slumber and that the Quartet would assume the responsibilities for which it was created and been quick to set in motion a negotiating process to move forward to a comprehensive political settlement.

However, matters seem to have turned out otherwise, after what we saw in Jericho several days ago and in occupied East Jerusalem and the surrounding area two days ago. Indeed, it is possible to read developments as unilateral Israeli actions taken solely to preserve their own interests and ignore negotiations on the basic issues, such as Jerusalem, the refugees and legitimate borders.

Perhaps the gathering today will be an important opportunity to exchange views at summit level on the possible repercussions of this situation.

Here in this place, I can but salute the outstanding exercise in democracy that has taken place in Palestine and wish the incoming government every success. We are confident it will act to achieve national unity and join within the Arab framework to resolve the conflict with Israel on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, which addresses the problem comprehensively, whether in relation to the Palestinian trajectory, the occupied Syrian Arab Golan or Lebanese territory still under occupation.

Turning from Palestine to Darfur where, although confused, the exaggerated information on crimes of genocide or ethnic cleansing has led to a sort of ambiguity.

The League of Arab States, in accordance with your previous resolutions, maintains at all times a relation of cooperation, understanding and coordination with the African Union, whether in relation to the talks in Abuja or the recent resolution of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in which the need was made clear to respect the sovereignty of the Sudan and obtain its agreement to any future measure relating to the deployment of non-Sudanese forces on its territory.

At the same time, provision of the support necessary for the continuity of the African forces and the success of the Abuja negotiations in the coming weeks, are distinct possibilities, if all parties act in good faith. Accordingly, it is possible that the picture will alter completely and develop into manageable elements for dealing with the problem and establish a more stable situation, if stability is what these parties actually want.

From Darfur to Lebanon, where the national dialogue – welcomed and blessed by the Arabs – is witness to the fact that drawing the destiny of this Arab country and safeguarding its interests will only be achieved within a context of free, national debate aimed at reaching a vision of its future agreed within the framework of its constitutional institutions. At the same time, this Arab framework that you represent shall not disdain to help achieve a positive and healthy relationship between Lebanon and Syria, two countries bound by deep-rooted historic ties, that will permit respect for the independence of both while, at the same time, maintain a fruitful relationship between them.

Turning from Lebanon to the occupied islands of the United Arab Emirates, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, I call upon the Iranian side to comply with the just demand either to hold negotiations or resort to international arbitration and settle this dispute in accordance with the principles of international law to preserve the historic and cultural ties that link both shores of the Gulf and surrounding area and to maintain Arab-Iranian relations in the Gulf, essential for the stability of the region, within a framework of joint understanding. The time has come to remove many of the obstacles to achieving momentum.

Mr. President,
Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,

This is a report summarizing Joint Arab Action, which I hope shall continue at all times, but particularly in the coming period, to confront actively the challenges, extend a hand to other countries and global blocs, cooperate with international and regional organizations, as benefactor and beneficiary, work to bring about a just and balanced peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli struggle, contribute to ending the tragedy of Iraq, reject the catastrophe of ethnic and sectarian clash, call for the dialogue and alliance of civilizations, deal firmly, effectively and decisively with the wave of hostility toward Islam and lead the process of change, development and modernization to achieve for Arab societies a qualitative leap forward so that the Arabs will keep pace with the age and have their place, position, role and share in the emerging international order.

In all of this I call upon you to support the Arab League, which represents you and collective Arab interests. It speaks in your name, defends your causes and interacts with the age in conscious understanding of both its positive and its negative aspects.

Thank you.

Peace be upon you.

List of Names of Heads of Arab Delegations participating in the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level

(listed alphabetically by Member State)

- His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- His Excellency Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain
- His Excellency al-Sayyid bin Masoud Rashid, Vice-President of the Union of the Comoros
- His Excellency Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti
- His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Nazif, Prime Minister, the Arab Republic of Egypt
- His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of Iraq
- His Majesty King Abdullah bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait
- His Excellency General Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic
- Brother Leader Muammar Al Qadhafi, Leader of the Great 1st of September Revolution, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- His Excellency Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, President of the Military Council for Justice and Democracy, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benaissa, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Kingdom of Morocco
- His Excellency Mr. Fahd Bin Mahmoud Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister, the Sultanate of Oman
- His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization
- His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar
- His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- His Excellency Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, President of the Federal Transitional Government of Somalia
- His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan

- His Excellency Bashar al-Asad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic
- His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Ghannouchi, Prime Minister, the Republic of Tunisia
- His Highness Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen

Annex III to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Report of the Secretary-General: Challenges and Achievements 2001-2006

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Introduction

The international and regional situations and their repercussions on Arab interests

1. The world is passing through a phase of disorder and unease, particularly since the events of 11 September 2001 dealt the United States of America a grievous shock, the repercussions of which extended to the States of the Islamic, and particularly Arab, world.

In reality, the roots of the disorder and unease date back to the 1990s, to the aftermath of the end of the cold war and the subsequent sweeping changes in the international situation. The United Nations was unable to agree upon clear or secure foundations for the new world order as the victorious side in the cold war sought to put into operation new strategic principles enabling it to achieve full control over the course of world events by a number of means, chiefly the ability to intervene in the internal affairs of States, primarily developing States, on the basis of certain rather elastic justifications allowing the possibility of regime change and occupation. The subject of respect for human rights was given priority for various conceptual reasons, including intervention in circumstances relating to their violation.

The fact is that, during the 1990s, a new international order capable of achieving international security and prosperity was not achieved, despite the widespread feeling that the international order in operation during the cold war needed to be reviewed once the usefulness of theories of mutual deterrence, containment and pacts came to an end with the passing of the bipolar world and dawning of a unipolar one and the urgent need to establish the necessary guarantees in the face of this radical development in international relations.

2. Doubts began to grow during the 1990s among elements of the international community, particularly in the developing world. Many of these misgivings hinged on the economics, goals and effects of globalization. A similar situation prevailed among a number of engaged civil society organizations, which held demonstrations to coincide specifically with talks on the mechanism regulating international trade, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), which was succeeded by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. This organization, with the developed countries making up two-thirds of the membership and taking its decisions on the basis of unanimity, became a focus for the regulation of an international economic system in which the rich countries dominate 70% of international trade.

Many developing countries conceive the possibility of and, indeed, are striving to establish, a new international order based upon repudiation of the use of force and, instead, building a world on the basis of partnership and respect for human rights, orientated toward disarmament, doubling of financial support, particularly to less developed countries, technology transfer and narrowing the gaps in levels of economic and social development between the rich and poor countries. Although this is not the place to elaborate, the developed countries maintain that corruption is worsening in the developing countries, which are not ready to progress toward the establishment of democracy and protection of human rights or to take the measures necessary for reform and development and satisfy the requirements of good governance. This has created a division and a form of confrontation between North and South that is heir to the division prevailing during the cold war. At the same time, dissertations published in the United States have influenced the currents of international life, particularly those writings on the clash of civilizations and the end of history with the triumph of Western, specifically US, civilization over all others.

3. These misgivings deepened and gave rise to questions in many international intellectual circles about the global situation: have complications increased rather than lessened, in contrast to expectations after the end of the cold war, and is the situation a candidate for a new existential tension? This was particularly the case after theories circulated during the 1990s, in parallel with globalization and its repercussions, calling for review, reinterpretation or suspension of a number of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly non-intervention in internal affairs, and the attempt to affirm the right or authority to intervene through military action, as previously mentioned. This trend almost shattered the Charter of the United Nations and several of the principles of international law, principally the non-use of force in international relations and the right of states to sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and other principles that governed and, perhaps, protected the international community from greater disorder during the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1990s, there emerged the above-mentioned theories on the inevitability of the clash of civilizations, the triumph of Western civilization and consequent defeat of others, with their own principles, ideas and cultures. Principal among these is Islamic civilization, which has been singled out for numerous attacks by prominent officials, intellectuals and strategists in several Western circles and a number of conservative intellectual circles in the United States.

4. The bloody events of 11 September 2001 represented a major upheaval in international trends and priorities and led to unprecedented pressures within the framework of international relations to re-shape the global agenda, giving primacy and the utmost priority to the issue of combating terrorism. However, while acknowledging the danger and the global unanimity to combat and suppress it, combating terrorism has unfortunately become a cover for international policies and approaches some of which have little to do with the fight against terrorism. The matter has developed into the adoption of unilateralist policies to protect individual interests at the expense, of course, of multilateral international organizations, principally the United Nations, whose role has been marginalized. The role of the Security Council has been circumscribed to a remarkable degree, despite its responsibility for the preservation of international peace and security.

The fact is, however, that this did not begin with the events of 11 September but was a current appearing clearly in the 1990s, during the civil war that led to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Then, there was a clear trend toward marginalization, on the grounds that the United Nations was incapable of leading operations at such a level of complexity and sensitivity. Needless to say, this marginalization affected the interests of small and medium sized nations more than others, exposing them to attempts at permanent subjugation to the dictates of larger and more aggressive international powers, without the dialogue or debate afforded by the United Nations system under its Charter. The results of this can be seen in a number of regions of the world, including the Middle East and Arab world. In the light of these challenges and the defects in international relations, it was natural that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should seek to address the situation by taking into account the new circumstances, whether those arising from the change to a unipolar international situation with all its demands and implications or from the attempt to impose a single item on the international agenda namely, the fight against international terror, despite the gravity and priority of other items, chiefly poverty, the spread of infectious diseases and the like. In November 2003, a High-Level Panel was formed, of which I was a member, charged with presenting an overview of the challenges facing the world and the reforms that might be made to the United Nations to address these challenges, achieving balance in the composition of the Security Council, while preserving its representative character in the light of the increased membership of the United Nations and its effectiveness as the principal branch of the United Nations responsible for peacekeeping and international security, and presenting new formulations for bringing about profound change in the United Nations to enable it to deal effectively with future threats arising from poverty, environmental change, terrorism, civil wars, conflicts between States, weapons of mass destruction and cross-border organized crime.

The Panel worked over the course of the year and presented its report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in December 2004. The report included some 300 recommendations, including proposals for reform of the Security Council stipulating the commitment to a number of policy principles in the reform process, of which the most important were:

- Participation of the developing world in decision-making;
- That reform should not lead to a weakening of the Security Council's effectiveness;
- That the Security Council should be more accountable.

However, the reform project did not materialize due to the emergence of sharp differences among members of the United Nations for a number of reasons, including the difficulty of reaching agreement between the geographic blocs and, indeed, within the one geographic bloc, as well as on the issue of the representation of developing countries on the Security Council. The debate on this subject still continues at the United Nations.

5. The clash of civilizations has imposed itself on international action but, despite the profusion of international meetings, academic and political, devoted to discussing topics related to it, it appears to me that no purpose has been served, at least not yet. No progress worth mentioning has been made in developing a stance vis-à-vis this clash or containing the attacks against Islam.

I believe that the matter is not related to a clash between civilizations as such but to a conflict with Islam, specifically. We hear nothing about criticisms directed at other religions or non-Islamic societies.

Although the matter has some importance in terms of self-debate or even self-criticism regarding the lack of progress in Islamic societies, the reasons for this, the extent of these societies' own responsibility for their backwardness and its occasional effects on other societies, the situation remains grave given the scale of the exaggerations and distortions, as well as the political objectives serving hostile strategies on the part of this group or that against the Islamic States, whether Arab or not. Indeed, several Arab and Muslim intellectuals attribute the matter entirely to a resurrection of the same ideas that unleashed the Crusades and that it is, in reality, a war conducted by other means and in the 21st century.

At Arab level

6. Over and above the consequences of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the grave strategic repercussions at Arab, regional and international levels which continued for more than a decade, these global changes produced negative developments, chief among which was the emergence of a deep fracture in Arab relations and in the conceptions of nationalism and Arab national security, all of which were shaken. Thereafter, the fabric on which the Arab stance and policy stood was weakened and, indeed, torn. Matters came to a head with the invasion of Iraq and all the consequences thereof with which we are living today.

The events and developments to which the Arab world was subjected in the last decade of the 20th century and beginning of the present century posed many questions and added new burdens, aggravating relations between Arab societies and the Arab situation in general, once the sharpness of these complications and the regional and international interplay of factors had widened the patchwork of crises in the Arab world. The Arab world began to seem like the weak link in a sea of conflicting currents, as its States became polarized and its very being was convulsed. This was in contrast to other international parties that were able to exploit the new international environment after the end of the cold war to their own advantage, continue to build unified entities and strengthen their own abilities, as is currently happening in the continent of Europe and in China, India, Brazil, Malaysia and other prominent international players on the international scene. Even in Africa and in States neighbouring the Arab world, change was treated with awareness and correct appreciation of the new challenges and by regional cooperation to address these by adopting decisive, collective stances to protect interests, develop capabilities and impose themselves as influential players. Arab frustration was increased with the revelations in international reports of the failure of Arab societies to keep pace with international developments, particularly in freedoms, growth, acquisition of technology, empowerment of women, education, eradication of illiteracy, culture, thought and science and other prevalent deficits, repeated and debated in numerous global gatherings where the Arab (and Islamic) world was seen as a sick man needing treatment.

Debate has been prompted in intellectual circles and in the media about the reasons for the decline of the Arab world to this state. Is it an anomalous, exceptional state of affairs in the history of the Arabs, imposed by external forces? Or is the crisis existential, the result of intellectual distortions caused by negative societal factors, as well as the compounding of mistakes in accounts and policy and an easy adventurism divorced from a correct appreciation of the course and consequence of events? Perhaps there has been an absence of a sound grasp of international developments and the importance for regional societies of addressing these. Factionalism in the Arab world has left an inability to adopt decisive, collective policies when the Arab position is faced with a divisive situation. Let us say nothing of the extent of commitment to obligations and joint positions decided within the Arab framework. Most political analyses in the Arab world have been directed toward an explanation of this state of affairs without offering appropriate solutions and creative ideas to help change the situation and address the mounting problems.

Debate has intensified over the reasons for the failure of the Arab world to take collective action and inability to impose the Arab agenda on the course of events or find a place for itself, particularly with regard to issues affecting security and higher interests. The argument has spread to the League of Arab States, mistakenly, in the opinion of some, held responsible for the Arab failure to address the grave events affecting the Arab world.

The Arab world is facing a series of challenges unprecedented in its modern history. These include:

(a) The movement for reform and modernization; the manner of the political, civil and economic reforms currently underway in a number of Arab States and the extent of their depth and breadth; the impact of these upon building for the future and strengthening links with the world in the age of globalization; the manner of accelerating the reforms demanded by Arab societies; the reactions to the initiatives proposed by the Americans and Europeans pertaining to political, economic and social reform in the Arab States, the confusion caused by their sheer number, interconnection and perhaps, too, their coincidence; questions about what lies behind them (attention is caught by the fact that the aims of these initiatives almost correspond). The collective jostling to propose similar initiatives has led to a feeling in the region that there is something that needs to be explained and has stirred questions about the call for reform. Reform must emerge from within Arab societies as an expression of pressing need and not be the product of certain passing events or a response to external pressures. Therefore, it is import to affirm that reform will continue as an outcome of positive social interaction, steered by the Arab States within civil society frameworks, as the product of the conviction that change and reform are needed to keep pace with the spirit of the age and the demands of the natural development of Arab societies. This is particularly so given that measures for change and development began some time ago in a number of Arab States and have brought about a significant transformation. The fruits have been seen in rapid expansion of political cooperation, freedoms, economic reform, concern with cultural creativity, as well as the expansion of civil society participation. While the statement that the Arab world – which, in any case, is not alone – is in need of reform and change is a truism expressing the needs of the Arab world, it does not imply the need to accept the goals of the approaches proposed, which are based upon a distorted or superficial idea that reform will lead to the demise of terrorism. This is a simplification that fails to take into account the meaning of terrorism, the totality of conditions prevailing in the region, the failure to solve its problems in all their dimensions and that the development of societies is, in all cases, something inevitable and natural that is subject to the specific conditions of these societies, several (but not all) of the elements of which are based on the principle of continuity. Otherwise, the opposite results will be achieved, as we have seen in the course of modern history in more than one state and region.

(b) The repercussions, dimensions and complications of the Iraqi crisis represent a new and grave challenge to the agenda of Joint Arab Action, requiring the search for answers on how to deal with these on the basis of maintaining the independence of Iraq as a major state and Member State of the League of Arab States with influence upon its immediate surroundings and, perhaps, beyond. The Iraqi crisis must also be dealt with from the standpoint of what has been said about the situation in Iraq as part of a more general disorder extending across most of the Arab world and the significance of this, or of letters directed to whom it may concern in the Arab world of the need for "review" of a number of, if not all, basic

Arab assumptions, seen as inconvenient by several political stalwarts in the United States.

(c) Confronting the intransigence of the Israeli position, due to the immunity the Israeli Government enjoys from any deterrent measures or international accountability for its failure to respect the resolutions of international legitimacy; how is it possible to change this imbalance, restart the peace process to restore Arab rights, establish the bases of a peaceful settlement founded on international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace, the achievement of regional security and stability, the utilization of abilities and potential to bring about the cultural renaissance of our peoples and the most effective means of building a decisive regional stance to confront the danger of Israel's monopoly of nuclear weapons with the same attention that is given to Iran's nuclear programme and bring its nuclear programme under international supervision? How do we restore the interest of the international community and its main players in the process of establishing a just peace in the region, reinforced by comprehensive regional security?

(d) Confronting the campaign of attacks against the Arab identity, the Islamic faith and its symbols, Arab nations and the individual Muslim, viewed in some Western countries with suspicion and sometimes as a predator; matters have reached the point where nothing is thought of insulting the Prophet Muhammad, while the negativity of some Western countries has reached the point of forbidding Arab students from enrolling in certain specializations in the exact sciences and advanced technology at their universities;

(e) The escalation of Arab problems and involvement of international dimensions, such as we see in Western Sudan (Darfur); likewise, there is the failure of the communities concerned to reach agreement and national reconciliation quickly in order to restore the national and international identity of their country, as is the case in Somalia;

(f) The absence of a national or regional programme to treat the problems of development in the countries within the Arab system, particularly those of the less developed group of countries, such as the Comoros Islands;

(g) The failure of economic integration efforts to achieve a positive outcome and increase production at national and regional levels; this is the case with the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, which – up to now and until such time as quick action is demanded – has fallen into the grip of bureaucracy, red tape and other negative features, with the consequent corruption and debasement of the original goals;

(h) The absence of an Arab policy to encourage scientific research at regional and joint level and the failure to provide the necessary financial resources; this calls for a radical review of the Arab world's policy on scientific research and making use of the abundant Arab scientific capabilities;

(i) The issue of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the region in accordance with the vision for a Middle East free from such weapons as the optimum solution to the risks of proliferation, and the need to firm up an effective, collective Arab position;

7. In the light of these developments and challenges, a bold technique for managing and developing the direction of Joint Arab Action must be sought, on the

basis of a new method and approach going beyond traditional frameworks and inhibiting sensitivities. It must take into account national requirements and regional trends and keep up with the rapid, varying and renewed pace of international developments. The logical point of entry for the reform process is development of the institution of the Arab system, overhaul of the relationship between the parties and increased interaction between Arab societies. This is in accordance with the mandate delivered by the Arab leaders upon my selection as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, when I was charged with modernizing and developing the system of Joint Arab Action, enabling the League and all its institutions and agencies to undertake their responsibilities and keep pace with regional and international developments. I proposed an objective and gradual plan of reform focusing in a number of elements, including:

- The Arab order for which we strive requires effective structural security and a widespread atmosphere of confidence and mutual interest among members so that each feels its security is protected and interests safeguarded. This system should be sufficiently cooperative, forceful and flexible to act as a safety valve for all members. In this respect, I refer to the extremely important developments contained in the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity among Arab Leaders and the Statement on Development and Modernization in the Arab world, both issued by the Tunis Summit, and in the resolution of the Algiers Summit establishing the Interim Arab Parliament and developing the voting mechanism;

- Restructuring of the regional, pan-Arab institution into a more contemporary and effective system, with greater prominence at Arab and international level; the League of Arab States is the crucible in which our joint efforts must fuse and emanate and from which must originate political, economic, social and security action, supported by the various specialized organizations, ministerial councils and professional federations;

- The participation of Arab civil society organizations and forces in activating areas of Arab action through the Economic and Social Council;

- Devoting the necessary attention to economic and social activity, binding Arab interests together and attempting to treat the deficiencies therein through the implementation of realizable projects with an impact upon development so that the Arab citizen will become aware of the benefit of Arab action to his situation and life.

8. I and my colleagues in the Secretariat-General still remember, while engaged with the process of reform, the many questions posed about the Arab situation; these questions included:

- How do we express the Arab reality in order to achieve a sort of harmony with new global concepts and demands? In other words, how do we achieve harmony between necessary diplomatic flexibility and adherence to fixed values that cannot be infringed without paying an unacceptable price?

- How do we determine our priorities, take hard decisions and ensure their implementation at all levels and in all areas?

- How do we reconcile the national and leadership duties of the parties to the Arab organization with the duties of the League as a regional and pan-Arab system, making it a part of the endeavour to realize the interests of its members and a factor for stability among all its parties and restore self-confidence to the Arab world and confidence in its extensive abilities to face challenges?

9. In the complex circumstances and ruinous crises the Arab region has witnessed and which are increasing in severity and enormity, I have exerted every effort to discharge my duty with full responsibility and impartiality. I have striven to develop methods of Joint Arab Action and enhance the League's performance in terms of organization, content and as a presence on the international arena. As I conclude this mandate at the head of the Secretariat-General, I believe it is appropriate to submit this brief report dealing with a number of activities and achievements within the framework of the League from 2001 to 2006, without neglecting the challenges, problems and weaknesses that remain potential or actual in Joint Arab Action and in the Arab system generally.

Chapter 1: Arab issues

a. The Palestinian issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict and energizing the Arab Peace Initiative

The Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict

10. Current development regarding the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict represent a fundamental axis in the political activity of the Arab League at all Arab levels and in regional and international assemblies. The intransigent stance of Israel in rejecting all peaceful initiatives is one of the gravest challenges facing Joint Arab Action in bringing about peace in the region. Successive Israeli governments have followed a policy of continued and escalating aggression against the Palestinian people, in addition to occupying Lebanese and Syrian territories, consolidating the settlement plan in occupied Arab lands, practising arbitrary measures based upon military force and persistence in building the racist separation wall in outright challenge to the protests of the international community, thereby rejecting any political vision leading to a peaceful, just and acceptable settlement to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

11. It has become clear that the strategic aim of Israeli policy is, ultimately, to impose its own peace by force, not by negotiation or in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. Its tactics are limited to imposing its own logic on the course of events of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to benefit from the protection – indeed, immunity – accorded to it by a great power to evade the obligations and requirements associated with the peace process and to seek to create new facts on the ground in implementation of its unilateral plan.

12. In this regard, we notice a change in the internal Israeli political scene, after the disappearance of Sharon from the political arena, the formation of the Kadima party and the regroupings that took place among members of the political parties after its formation. At the same time, we are witnessing an important change in the Palestinian political scene following the success of Hamas in the democratic elections that recently took place in Palestine. This change of players and sources of authority suggests a different sort of activity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

13. We likewise observe a development in the peace process (although it does exist, it is the commonly-used name for the Arab-Israeli negotiations and I use the

term for the sake of convenience). This development may be summarized by the repeated assertions of well-informed international sources that so-called peace process will come to a standstill in favour of the unilateral Israeli peace measures, requiring no process of negotiation and no mutual concessions.

The occupied Syrian Arab Golan

14. Regarding the peace process on the Syrian front, the Syrian leadership has announced on a number of occasions its readiness to restart the peace negotiations unconditionally. Israel, however, has not responded. In the course of contacts and consultations with various international parties, I have sought to give prominence to the Arab position in support of the just Syrian demand and its right to recover the entire occupied, Syrian Arab Golan up to the line of June 1967, in accordance with the bases of the peace process, the terms of reference of the Madrid conference and resolutions of international legality calling for full withdrawal from the occupied, Syrian Arab Golan and affirming the illegality of all measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities designed to alter the legal, natural and demographic status of the occupied, Syrian Arab Golan.

15. I have likewise sought to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the Security Council of the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level and ministerial level rejecting the unilateral US imposition of sanctions on the Syrian Arab Republic and requesting the United States of America to pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy as a means of understanding between States and of solving disputes between them and to review this act, which represents a clear bias in favour of Israel, in order to avoid a worsening of the situation and increasing the uncertainty and mistrust in the Middle East. The sanctions also represent an unwarranted infringement of Arab interests.

16. I likewise had contacts with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the racist practices on the part of the Israeli occupation authorities against Syrian nationals under occupation in the occupied, Syrian Arab Golan. Various international and regional organizations were notified of the resolution on this subject.

Solidarity with and support for Lebanon

17. The efforts of the Secretariat-General on the international stage and in its relations with international and regional organizations has given prominence to the Arab stance in support of Lebanon, its right to resist occupation by various legitimate ways and means and to complete the liberation of its territory from Israeli occupation to the internationally agreed borders on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The Secretariat-General likewise condemned Israel for its continued detention of a number of Lebanese in its prisons, for failing to hand over to the United Nations up to now all the maps showing the locations of mines laid by its occupation forces and for the continued land, sea and air violations of Lebanese territory.

18. The Secretariat-General circulated the resolutions of the League of Arab states at summit level and ministerial level on solidarity with and support for Lebanon. Likewise, I sent letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Security Council, the President of the International Committee of the Red

Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the demand of the international community and international judicial and political bodies for pressure to be put on Israel to cease its violations of the sovereignty and sanctity of Lebanese territory and to provide compensation to Lebanon for the damage and losses resulting from the continued attacks on its territory.

19. Lebanon has witnessed momentous events, the foremost of which were the death of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and subsequent withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, in addition to the acute tension that overtook relations between the two sisterly states, Syria and Lebanon. In this regard, the Security Council issued resolution 1595 (7 April 2005) for an international investigation to be conducted into the death former Prime Minister al-Hariri and his companions. This is still in progress and various concerned bodies have undertaken to cooperate with the investigation, which is expected to discover the truth behind this terrible event. It is, likewise, a warning that political assassination shall not pass without investigation, exposure and punishment.

20. An important and timely development was the Lebanese national dialogue called for by Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese National Assembly and responded to by Lebanese leaders of all persuasions. We hope that this step will be successful and its results reflected in domestic Lebanese political activity, as well as policy toward its neighbours and region. At least, we hope that it will contribute to bringing together Lebanese political forces and creating a suitable foundation for the formation of a unified or coordinated national and Arab stance on which to build political action to contain the existing crisis, the repercussions and consequences of which are well understood.

The Arab Peace Initiative as a common framework for settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict

21. The Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Arab Summit at Beirut (2002) represents the Arab strategic line for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the framework defining the collective Arab position toward the settlement process and its demands.

22. This initiative received positive reactions at international level and was welcomed in resolution 1397 (12 March 2002) of the Security Council, where it was described as the initiative of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shortly before adoption as a resolution by the Arab Summit in Beirut to become an Arab initiative.

23. Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) is the first to refer to the establishment of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, side by side. Accordingly, it affirms the stipulation of resolution 181 (1947) of the General Assembly of the United Nations regarding the two-state principle.

24. In implementation of paragraph 7 of resolution 221 (28 March 2002) of the Beirut Summit on the Arab Peace Initiative and after consulting with Member States and the Secretary-General, the Summit Presidency at the time (the Lebanese Republic) undertook to form the Special Committee to Support the Arab Peace Initiative, composed of the following States: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Palestine, the Lebanese Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom

of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen, as well as the Secretary-General. The State of Qatar requested inclusion in the membership. The Republic of Tunisia, by virtue of its chairmanship of the 16th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria by virtue of its chairmanship of the 17th ordinary session were subsequently included in the membership.

25. Within the framework of Arab political activity in support of the Arab Peace Initiative and to explain its provisions to the outside world, particularly bodies directly concerned with the peace process in the Middle East, and given that it is the framework initiative for defining the collective Arab position toward a peaceful settlement and its requirements, I sent letters on 1 April 2002 to a number of international officials, including the Secretaries-General of regional and international organizations and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union, the United States of America, Canada, Japan, the Russian Federation and China. I followed up these letters with consultations.

26. The Arab Peace Initiative Committee held a consultative meeting at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 9 May 2002. Likewise, two official ministerial meetings were held in Beirut on 17 and 18 May 2002 where means of activating the initiative in the international arena were discussed. On 12 July 2002, during the first ministerial meeting of the Follow-up and Action Committee, means of Arab action to promote the Initiative in the light of the Beirut meeting were discussed.

27. The Arab Peace Initiative Committee held its second meeting on 13 September 2002 at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York where means of activating the Arab Peace Initiative were discussed, as well as the possibility of submitting it to the Security Council to provide international support. Five Arab Member States of the Committee (the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Republic and the Arab Republic of Egypt) met with the Quartet in New York on 17 September 2002. The statement issued by the Quarter on that date reaffirmed "the continuing importance of the initiative of Saudi Arabia, endorsed at the Arab League Beirut Summit, which is a vital plan of the foundation of international efforts to promote a comprehensive peace on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks".

28. Paragraph 5 of resolution 1435 (24 September 2002) of the Security Council states that the Security Council "expresses its full support for the efforts of the Quartet and calls upon the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and all States in the region to cooperate with these efforts and recognizes in this context the continuing importance of the initiative endorsed at the Arab League Beirut Summit".

29. The Arab Peace Initiative Committee held its third meeting on 3 February 2004 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, under the chairmanship of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Through wide-ranging discussions at these meetings, agreement was reached upon the need to take a number of measures to activate the Arab Peace Initiative.

30. The 16th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Tunis, 2004) adopted resolution 259 (23 May 2004) summoning the

Arab Peace Initiative Committee at ministerial level, under the current Summit Presidency and in collaboration with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, to proceed immediately upon conclusion of the Summit to implement the action plan on the international stage for the purpose of energizing the initiative and to submit a report on the Committee's work and results thereof to the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level.

31. Within the framework of implementation of the resolution of the Tunis Summit (2004) on energizing the Arab Peace Initiative, I again sent letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, the President of the European Union, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Members of the Quartet in which I proposed the convening of a joint ministerial meeting between the Quartet and the Ministerial Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative. I received replies from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland (then holding the Presidency of the European Union), Mr. Brian Cowan and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, Mr. Javier Solana, which were unanimously supportive of the proposal. The members of the Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative were informed of the content of the replies. Likewise, I maintained contact and consultations on this subject with the Summit Presidency and members of the Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative at ministerial level.

32. The Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative at delegate level held a meeting on 6 June 2004 to study ways of implementing the Summit resolution, particularly in relation to preparing the Committee's draft international action plan. The meeting led to charging a reduced committee, under the chairmanship of the Republic of Tunisia and with membership consisting of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Palestine, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Secretariat-General, to draw up a draft action plan.

33. At the end of its third meeting on 22 June 2004, the reduced committee reached a decision on the required draft action plan, which was submitted to the second meeting of the Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative at delegate level on 27 June 2004 and adopted. The Secretariat-General circulated it to all Member States of the Committee on 28 June 2004, requesting to be informed of views prior to its submission to the meeting of the Committee at ministerial level.

34. Within this framework, the Committee took note of the work of the Secretariat-General in monitoring implementation of the Summit resolution on energizing the Arab Peace Initiative, consisting of letters sent to the heads of regional and international organizations and Members of the Quartet. I have dealt with this subject in various political and media communications conducted recently at various levels. Likewise, I sent letters to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative, enclosing a report on the work of the Committee and the draft action plan drawn up for energizing the Initiative.

35. The Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative at ministerial level held a meeting on 14 September 2004 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, at which I pointed out two important matters included in resolution 259 of the Tunis Summit:

- To mandate the Special Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative to consult with the Quarter and call for a joint meeting to be held;
- To prepare for the convening of the Security Council pursuant to a joint Arab request in the event that the desired progress is not achieved in accordance with the resolution of the Tunis Summit.

The said meeting issued guidelines for action on the Arab Peace Initiative.

36. I directed the heads of overseas missions of the League of Arab States to coordinate with the councils of Arab ambassadors by submitting specific proposals for activities that might be undertaken in the course of their work and to submit an initial report on the financial cost of these activities and the possibility of financing them through the councils of Arab ambassadors, Arab-European Chambers of Commerce or other sources.

37. I directed that a pamphlet be prepared in English on the Arab Peace Initiative, to include a foreword by the Secretary-General and the text of the Initiative. This was also translated into Spanish.

38. The most important terms of reference governing the settlement process of the Arab-Israeli conflict remain as follows:

- Relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 194 (1948), 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 478 (1980);
- The principle of land for peace (Madrid, 1991);
- Security Council resolutions 1397, 1402, 1403 and 1405 (all 2002);
- The statement (24 June 2002) of the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush on the establishment of two adjacent states, the State of Israel and State of Palestine, living side by side;
- The Road Map (20 December 2002);
- The Arab Peace Initiative, adopted at the Beirut Summit (28 March 2002).

The matter requires the intensification of political activity with all concerned regional and international forces in the light of recent developments in the Palestinian arena following the success of the Hamas movement in the legislative elections and formation of a new Palestinian Government. The Arab position might focus on the principles and provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut, 2002), which I believe it is important that the new Palestinian Government affirms its commitment to. It is, likewise, necessary to activate the resolutions of Arab Summits on the provision of financial support to reinforce the steadfastness of the Palestinian people.

Support for the Palestinian people and Palestinian National Authority against Israeli aggression and the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people

39. I have been especially concerned with the provision of support to the Palestinian people and their National Authority, particularly during the recent intifada. In this context, I have monitored the work of the al-Aqsa Fund and Intifada Al-Quds Fund that were established by the extraordinary session of the Council of

the League of Arab States (Cairo, 2000) with resources determined at a total of US$ 1 billion for both Funds. The contributions from Arab States paid to the account of the two Funds amounted to US$ 681,199,000 as at February 2006.

40. In this context, I sent letters to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to provide additional support to the two Funds of US$ 150,000,000 in accordance with the resolution of the Beirut Summit (2002). Amounts paid stood at US$ 79,838,000 by February 2006.

41. Within the framework of support for the budget of the Palestinian National Authority, the Secretariat-General opened an account with the Arab Bank to receive the contributions of States, which amounted to US$ 656,098,235 from the original US$ 1,980,000,000 up to the end of March 2006.

42. I likewise called for a meeting of Arab Ministers of Finance at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 22 June 2004 to determine ways of providing financial support for the budget of the Palestinian National Authority.

43. I formed a committee within the framework of the Secretariat-General on 2 May 2002 to supervise the measures relating to collection of popular contributions. The sum of US$ 5,000,000 has been transferred to Palestinian labourers and small farmers who have suffered loss. The distribution of 84,500 food parcels to the families of martyrs, prisoners and the needy has taken place.

44. I participated in the meeting held in London at the beginning of March 2005 to assist the Palestinian National Authority rebuild its security, institutional and economic capacity. The Secretariat-General participated in the international donors meeting held in Oslo on 25 April 2005. The Secretariat-General took part with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Palestinian National Authority in organizing the Arab International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, held in Beirut from 11 to 14 October 2004.

The diplomatic battle for a ruling from the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the racist separation wall on Palestinian territory

45. Within the framework of the Arab efforts at United Nations level concerning the racist separation wall and the thwarting of Arab action in the Security Council by United States opposition and its veto of the draft resolution on the separation wall presented to the Security Council on 12 October 2003, the Arab bloc resorted to the 10th Extraordinary Emergency Session of the General Assembly and succeeded in causing a resolution to be adopted on 21 October 2003 demanding that Israel cease and cancel construction of the wall on occupied Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem and environs, which is considered a breach of the armistice of 1949 and a violation of the provisions of international law. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to submit a periodic report to the Security Council on the extent of Israeli compliance with the resolution and to take other measures, if necessary.

46. After the General Assembly discussed the Secretary-General's report of 21 November 2003, which concluded that Israel had not complied with the demand of the General Assembly to cease and cancel construction of the wall on occupied Palestinian lands, the Arab bloc were successful, on 8 December 2003, in causing a resolution of the General Assembly to be adopted, on the basis of which the matter was referred to the International Court of Justice to request a consultative opinion

on the legal consequences arising from construction of the wall on occupied Palestinian lands.

47. After issuance of the General Assembly's resolution, I proceeded immediately to form a team of international legal experts to work with the Secretariat-General's experts on the follow-up of all aspects of this subject. The subject was discussed during a number of consultative meetings held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, in which the permanent representatives and a group of Arab legal experts met to study ways of coordinating Arab action and best means of dealing with this issue and to prepare oral and written submissions to the International Court of Justice.

48. The delegation of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States participated in the oral and written submissions to the International Court of Justice, together with other states and international organizations, on 25 February 2004. The diplomatic efforts led by the League of Arab States and the diplomatic battle it joined at international level[2] bore fruit with the issue of the consultative opinion of the International Court of Justice demanding dismantling of the Israeli occupation forces' racist wall on occupied Palestinian lands. On 20 July 2004, the General Assembly of the United Nations issued a resolution endorsing the Court's opinion by a majority of 150 votes, including the entire European Union group. This subject requires urgent follow-up by Arab diplomats to mobilize the international community to follow up the General Assembly's resolution and work to implement its provisions.

Formation of the Arab committee to assist in drawing up the Palestinian draft Constitution

49. I have been especially concerned with the work of the committee mandated to prepare the Palestinian draft Constitution. In this context, I inaugurated the work of the committee set up to formulate and prepare the draft Constitution on 14 January 2003, under the chairmanship of Dr. Esmat Abdel Maguid and affirmed in my address the importance of this project in preparing for the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State.

50. The committee held two meetings on 7 January 2003 and 6 March 2003 in general order at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States. The document was discussed in detailed, such additions and amendments as the committee saw fit were made and the form of the draft Constitution was adopted. I presented the draft document to the Palestinian leadership for submission to the Palestinian Central Council, with the proviso that the committee would continue its work by revising the form of the document in the light of what the Palestinian Central Council may decide.

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[2] The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contributed the sum of US$ 50,000 to cover the legal costs and fees of the lawyer retained by the Secretariat-General to appear before the International Court of Justice in this case.

b. Management of the Iraqi crisis

Attempts to avert the war against Iraq

51. During the Amman Summit of 2001, a number of attempts were made to reach an Arab agreement on dealing with the situation between Iraq and Kuwait through a common resolution but this was not adopted due to Iraq's non-agreement.

52. The leaders then resolved to entrust His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, President of the Summit, with the conduct of consultations with Arab leaders and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and to liaise as necessary to continue discussion of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.[3] At the same time, the leaders called for sanctions against Iraq to be lifted and humanitarian issues relating to Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons and Iraqi and other missing persons to be dealt with.[4]

53. Within this framework and after consulting with His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and President of the Summit, and with the leaders and officials of various Arab States, I visited Baghdad on 18 and 19 January 2001 as part of a tour of Arab capitals after my election as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. During the visit, I held talks with the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein and his Government where the Iraq situation and the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, particularly regarding Kuwaiti and other prisoners and the need to change Iraqi policy toward Kuwait were discussed. I dealt specifically with the subject of relations between Iraq and the United Nations and the implementation of Security Council resolutions. Agreement was reached on the importance of a resumption of dialogue between the Government of Iraq and the Secretary-General of the United Nations without prior conditions. I conveyed this to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in connection with talks and prior understanding between us, in the course of two meetings, the first of which was held in Vienna on 29 January 2002 and the second in New York on 4 February 2002, in which Dr. Hans Blix, Head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) participated and following which the Secretary-General of the United Nations agreed to invite the Government of Iraq to resume dialogue. The first meeting was set for 7 March 2002.

54. A number of meetings were held between Iraqi officials, Dr. Hans Blix, Head of UNMOVIC and Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

55. In implementation of paragraph 5 of resolution 1441 (2002) of the Security Council, Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei submitted their reports to the Security Council on 27 January 2003. Both lacked any unequivocal assertion that that Iraq had not cooperated with the team of inspectors. The form of the two reports differed. Dr. ElBaradei stated that his committee had not, to date, come across any conclusive evidence that Iraq had resumed its nuclear programme and that it had not been denied access to sites it had wished to inspect. He affirmed that, if Iraq continued to cooperate positively, his team would be able within a few months to provide tangible evidence regarding the nuclear situation in Iraq, acknowledging that the period requested is for peaceful efforts to bear fruit to enable war to be avoided. On

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[3] Final communiqué of the Amman Summit, paragraph 25.

[4] Final communiqué of the Amman Summit.

the other hand, the report of Dr. Blix raised a number of questions. Despite noting Iraq's cooperation in many respects, his report contained a number of reservations, prompting the United States of America and United Kingdom to deem these a violation by Iraq of its commitments under resolution 1441 (2002) of the Security Council, during the session of the Security Council on 4 February 2003 in which then United States Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered a speech on this issue. The interventions of several Members of the Security Council focused upon requesting that the inspectors be given more time to complete their job in Iraq in the proper fashion and within the framework of the required cooperation from the Government of Iraq.

56. In this charged atmosphere, international diplomacy moved to prevent the outbreak of war and find a peaceful settlement of the crisis within the framework of the United Nations, based upon Iraq's full commitment to implementing Security Council resolutions and leading to a possible review of the sanctions imposed upon the country. At that time, there was some speculation about "smart sanctions" to avoid the negative effects of sanctions on the mass of the population and confining them to the regime.

57. The intense Arab diplomatic activity continued to drive international efforts toward making the peaceful option for resolving the crisis prevail, considering it the way to ensure that the Iraqi crisis is dealt with and spare Iraq and the region the grave effects of war and its local and regional complications, while ensuring Iraq's cooperation with the Security Council, all within the framework of the Security Council's responsibility for maintaining international security peace. Although partially successful, these efforts nevertheless failed because the decision for war against Iraq had already been taken.

The serious repercussions of the war

58. The war had serious repercussions that are still at work and left behind a new situation requiring careful monitoring of developments and complications and ongoing activity in all areas to help overcome the various humanitarian, political, economic and social aspects of the crisis, speed the restoration of Iraq's national sovereignty and work toward ending foreign occupation. Our activities during the last period have concentrated upon the following:

59. Communication and consultations were intensified at Arab, regional and international levels, on the one hand and in the Iraqi arena, on the other through communications and meetings that I conducted – alongside a number of bilateral Arab contacts – with several Iraqi political forces, political and civil figures and organizations and religious authorities to listen to their views. They expressed their commitment to the Arab identity of Iraq or their allegiance to Iraq as a part of the Arab world. In conversation, many affirmed the need for the League of Arab States to play a key role in Iraq, together with the United Nations, and demanded the establishment of a legitimate Iraqi government representing all sections and shades of the Iraqi people.

60. In this context, at the 43rd ordinary session of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union (Beirut, 3 June 2003), I issued an invitation to all Iraqis, welcoming all political forces to visit the League of Arab States and meet under its auspices.

61. This invitation came at a time when differences of opinion had begun to emerge among Iraqi political forces over how to move toward establishment of the new Iraq. The Arab proposal was based upon the spirit of the League's Charter and the idea of the Arab nation, pained by events in Iraq. It was also based upon resolution 1483 (2003) of the Security Council, requesting international and regional organizations to participate in implementation of the resolution, which stipulates the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty and regional security.

62. In my address of 11 April 2003 to the meeting of the Security Council convened to discuss the role of the United Nations and regional organizations vis-à-vis the new challenges to international peace and security, I dealt with the serious challenges to the credibility of the role entrusted to the Security Council and of the collective international security system maintained by the United Nations which the war against Iraq had raised. I called in my address for an international conference to be held on the future of the collective regional and international security system in confronting current challenges, to be preceded by regional meetings to discuss the same subject at the level of regional organizations and geographic groupings in preparation for the international conference.

63. On 22 July 2003, the Security Council met in session under the Presidency of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain to hear the report of Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the mission of his special representative for Iraq, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, in implementation of paragraph 24 of resolution 1483 (2003) of the Security Council, which affirms that the goals of the United Nations support "the right of the Iraqi people freely to determine their own political future and control their own natural resources … that the day when Iraqis govern themselves must come quickly". A government must be formed that is representative "of all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender" and "it is important that Iraqis are able to see a clear timetable leading to the full restoration of sovereignty. There is a pressing need to set out a clear and specific sequence of events leading to the end of military occupation."

64. Addressing the Security Council, Mr. Annan referred to the basic principles guiding implementation of the activities of the United Nations on the basis of resolution 1483 (2003), describing these as principles embraced by all. These are: the need to respect the independence of Iraq and sanctity of its territory; the need for the people of Iraq to regain sovereignty as soon as possible; the need to respect the right of the Iraqi people to determine their political future; the need to respect the sovereignty of Iraq over its territory and natural resources; the need for Iraq to regain its position as a full and responsible partner in the international community, enjoying good relations with its neighbours.

65. On 13 July 2003, the formation of the 25-member Iraqi Interim Governing Council (IGC) was announced. Several Arab States affirmed the importance of the IGC as a step toward the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty, the ending of the occupation and the beginning of the process toward formation of an Iraqi national Government representing all shades of Iraqi society and capable of realizing the aspirations of the Iraqi people. They affirmed that the work of and powers enjoyed by the IGC would be closely followed.

Arab engagement with the Iraqi situation

Political issues

66. Within the framework of Arab political action, the Follow-up and Action Committee studied the situation in Iraq at its ministerial level meeting in Manama on 9 and 10 June 2003. It heard a series of questions asked by the Committee chairman, Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifah, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain on what the Arab stance should be. A dialogue was conducted on different aspects of developments in Iraq and it was agreed that the most appropriate thing to do was to focus on contact with the Iraqi people through reinforcing the Arab role in the provision of humanitarian assistance, while maintaining contact with all the political forces in the country, within the framework of collaboration with the United Nations and its specialist agencies. Consultations on this subject should continue in preparation for discussion at the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level.

67. The Follow-up and Action Committee held a second ministerial meeting at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 4 and 5 August 2003 to study developments in the situation in Iraq in the light of the announcement of the formation of the IGC and the outcome of the Security Council meetings on 22 July 2003. Agreement was reached on the formulation of a group of points to be submitted to the Summit Presidency for consultation with Arab leaders in order to crystallize a unified Arab position for dealing with the Iraqi situation and its developments. The Follow-up and Action Committee formed a sub-committee, chaired by the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Tunisia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Republic, the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States as members to monitor Iraqi developments and manage the necessary international contacts, particularly through the General Assembly of the United Nations.

68. On 24 August 2003, I received at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General members of the Iraqi IGC under the presidency of Ibrahim al-Jaafari, at their request. During the meeting, they explained the circumstances of the formation of the IGC as an embodiment of the vision of a majority of the political players in Iraq that approximates to a large extent the situation in Iraq and has filled a political vacuum which, had it continued, would have represented a grave danger to the unity and stability of Iraq. They affirmed the desire of the IGC to work to restore the sovereignty of Iraq and build a new order in the country where freedom and democracy prevail within a federal framework that takes the demands of the Kurdish citizens into account.

69. The delegation likewise affirmed the adherence of the IGC to pan-Arab values and its commitment to Arab issues, principally the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The IGC explained that it enjoyed wide powers, such as the right to reserve acceptance of military forces from neighbouring States and accept those from other States, if necessary.

70. The delegation likewise explained its action plan, designed basically to speed up the end of the occupation. The pressing tasks of the IGC are the selection of ministers to occupy ministerial portfolios, the formulation of a new Constitution for

Iraq and choosing Iraqi diplomats to fill diplomatic posts in the embassies of Iraq overseas and in regional and international organizations.

71. The delegation affirmed that the provision of Arab financial support to the IGC would lead to a strengthening of its credibility, expand its competence and enable it to shorten the period of occupation.

72. The delegation likewise requested the Arab States to enable it to fill Iraq's seat at the League of Arab States, re-open Iraqi embassies in Arab capitals, for the Arab States to participate in the Iraq Donors' Conference to be held in Spain in October 2003, to provide assistance for basic services and to contribute to reconstruction and the promotion of investment in Iraq.

73. I affirmed to the delegation the stance of the League of Arab States toward the IGC as one of a number of steps required toward the formation of a national government representing all sections of the Iraqi people and able to realize their aspirations, principally an end to the occupation. I informed Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the substance of the meeting and called for consideration of the Iraqi request to fill Iraq's seat at the League on the grounds of maintaining the country's link with the Arab world and resist the attacks against its Arab identity. A resolution in this regard was taken at the 120th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level on 9 September 2003, in consequence of which the IGC filled Iraq's seat at the League and its organizations.

74. The subject of developments in the situation in Iraq became a permanent item on the agenda of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level and ministerial level and the subject of management of the Iraqi crisis represented a particular priority of League activity, carefully followed up at all levels and regional and international assemblies.

Protection of the Iraqi cultural heritage

75. Immediately after the start of the war, I sent letters to the Arab Ministers of Culture, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of UNESCO, the Director of the British Museum and the Director of the Louvre, appealing for efforts to be made to activate the international resolutions on protection of Iraqi archaeological areas from the effects of the war. I likewise requested ALECSO to hold an urgent, pan-Arab meeting of heritage officials and directors of antiquities in the region to draw up an action plane for the recovery of looted antiquities. Pursuant thereto, a joint meeting was held on 7 and 8 June 2003. I likewise worked to include the subject of protection of the Iraqi cultural heritage on the agenda of the joint meeting of Arab Ministers of Culture and Information held on 27 and 28 June 2003 in Cairo.

76. At the same time, I issued a statement on 21 March 2003 in which I requested the international community, the Security Council and UNESCO to protect the Iraqi cultural heritage, which represents an historical epoch of outstanding importance to human civilization. I requested the international community and all concerned institutions to assume their historic responsibilities to protect these treasures and strive to apply the relevant international agreements on the protection of heritage property in the event of the outbreak of armed conflict.

77. In the same context, I received a number of replies to the letters I had written, including one from Mr. Kofi Annan who affirmed that the United States and Great Britain had been requested on the basis of international law to strive to protect the Iraqi heritage.

78. The Secretariat-General monitored developments in this matter in collaboration with UNESCO and ALECSO, the Director-General of which called for an extraordinary joint meeting of the permanent committee for Arab culture and the office of the permanent committee for antiquities and cultural heritage, with the participation of the League of Arab States on 7 and 8 June 2003. In the course of this meeting, discussions were held on the reports and documents prepared on the looting, burning, destruction and smuggling of Iraqi antiquities. Agreement was reached to draw up technical and procedural recommendations designed to recover stolen Iraqi antiquities, restore the damaged heritage and pay compensation for several missing items with donations from government and private agencies.

79. The joint meeting of Arab Ministers of Culture and Information held on 27 and 28 June 2003 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General studied the subject of protection of Iraqi cultural heritage and adopted a resolution stipulating the formation of a special team of cultural heritage and antiquities experts to assist the security authorities in seizing and recovering stolen Iraqi antiquities, to run an intensive media campaign focusing on the risks arising from this disaster and call for a general conference of Arab libraries to be held to offer the necessary support to Iraqi libraries.

Human rights issues

80. In the light of the information uncovered about mass graves containing the remains of Iraqis and other Arab nationals, I directed that this subject be studied carefully within the framework of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights, meeting in extraordinary session at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General from 18 to 26 June 2003. I likewise issued a statement in which I condemned these acts as practices that could not be overlooked and must be vigorously condemned. The Committee discussed the subject of mass graves in Iraq, on the basis that each human being has the natural right to life, as enshrined in divine law, customary law and international charters on human rights. It affirmed that the mass graves uncovered in Iraq represent a clear violation of the human right to life and are contrary to the religious, cultural and civilizational values of the Arab nation. The Committee made a recommendation on this subject that was submitted to the 120th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level; the recommendation included condemnation of the crimes relating to the mass graves.

81. The 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Committee convened during the war against Iraq and a number of Member States of the Committee sought to hold a special session on 22 March 2003 to study the humanitarian situation in Iraq under the shadow of the war and a draft resolution was prepared for submission to the session. Certain pressures, however, prevented the session from convening.

82. The 18th session of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights (16 to 18 February 2004) discussed the subject of the human rights violations of the previous Iraqi Government, particularly the gross violations that took place during the

occupation of the State of Kuwait and the expunging of the facts relating to Kuwaiti and third country prisoners and missing persons, the remains of a number of whom were found in recently uncovered mass graves. The Committee expressed its deep condolences to the families of the victims whose remains have been identified and concern at the ordeal of those whose location remains unknown. It demanded that all efforts be made to discover the fate of all Kuwaiti and third country nationals, that material assistance be provided to the Iraqi entities responsible for the uncovering and protection of mass graves and identification of the remains of the victims and that the members of the former regime who perpetrated crimes against the Iraqi people and crimes against humanity be brought before Iraqi courts in accordance with Iraqi law.

The activities of specialized Arab organizations and councils

83. I called for the entire Joint Arab Action system and its agencies in their fields of competence and in accordance with available potential and capabilities to study ways of supporting and assisting the Iraqi people.

84. In implementation thereof, the Secretariat-General organized a number of meetings in which representatives of all the specialized Arab organizations and councils participated and the role of the Arab system in providing support and assistance to the Iraqi people in the current delicate period and in the future were discussed. Each organization reviewed the preparations it had made and its proposals for what could be provided immediately. The Government of Iraq was contacted with a view to putting this into action but the security situation prevented effective implementation of these offers.

85. Within the framework of monitoring implementation of resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit and ministerial levels, a memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat-General and the Government of Iraq was signed in September 2005. This included cancellation of 70% of the Republic of Iraq's total arrears to the budget of the Secretariat-General up to the end of 2003 and payment by Iraq of 30% of its total debt due up to 2003, in equal instalments, for a period of 10 years with effect from 1 January 2007, on condition that Iraq pays its contribution to the budget of the Secretariat-General for 2005 and 2006.

86. I called for the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to those who suffered loss due to the floods that affected a number of cities in the north of Iraq, within the framework of the relief campaign organized by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It should be pointed out that the United Arab Emirates provided substantial aid within the framework of this campaign.

Monitoring of developments in the situation in Iraq

87. The Secretariat-General monitored the outcome of meetings held between several Arab leaders and officials where developments in the situation in Iraq were studied, the hope expressed that Iraq would regain stability and the formation of the IGC affirmed as a step that needed to be followed by others in preparation for the formation of an Iraqi national Government with international recognition.

88. The joint Arab statement issued at the six-way Summit held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 3 June 2003 which included, in addition to the US President, the

leaders of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, stated the following:

> We reaffirm our support for the Iraqi people in their efforts to rebuild their country and affirm once more our commitment to the future of Iraq and its territorial integrity under a government that represents the Iraqi people and emanates from their own free will, whereby Iraq may live in peace and harmony with its neighbours. In this regard, we consider Security Council resolution 1483 a useful means of achieving these goals.

89. In the context of political action with the United Nations, I continued to have contacts and meetings with United Nations officials, principally Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations and his assistants. I affirmed the need to speed up the formation of an Iraqi national Government to administer the affairs of the country, realize the interests of the Iraqi people and end the occupation. Agreement was reached on continuing the collaboration between the League of Arab States and the United Nations in this regard.

90. In the light of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented to the Security Council on 15 July 2003, the Security Council adopted resolution 1500 (13 August 2003) that "welcomes the establishment of the … Governing Council of Iraq … as an important step towards the formation by the people of Iraq of an internationally recognized, representative government that will exercise the sovereignty of Iraq".

The Security Council likewise resolved to establish a United Nations mission to assist Iraq and support the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the performance of his task, as determined on the basis of resolution 1483 (2003).

91. The criminal explosion at the headquarters of the United Nations in Baghdad was a grave development that resulted in tens of dead and wounded, among them the special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, as well as three Arab staff members, Mrs. Nadia Younes, Mrs. Reham Al-Farra and Mr. Jean Selim Kanaan and a number of Iraqi nationals. This criminal act represented a severe setback for the situation in Iraq at that time, particularly the security situation, and confirmed the importance of accelerating the formation of an Iraqi national authority to represent the Iraqi people, responsible for the administration of policy and control of events so that Iraq may once again be an active player in Arab, regional and international politics. This issue also requires the intensification of Arab efforts in various political and security fields.

92. Immediately after this crime occurred, I contacted Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations and offered condolences on behalf of the Secretariat-General. I expressed full solidarity with him, the United Nations and its team working in Iraq. There was full agreement that this terrorist incident will not daunt the resolve of the United Nations to continue its efforts and its role in helping Iraq and saving it from its ordeal.

93. I was anxious to strengthen collaboration with the United Nations in regard to all measures relating to the handling of the Iraqi crisis and strengthening the role of the United Nations in Iraq. I followed up meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries in geographic proximity to Iraq, with the cooperation of the

Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Bahrain, and attended other meetings in these countries. I participated in all the meetings of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq Donor Committee.

94. In affirmation of the desire to make contact with the Iraqi people, express Arab solidarity with them, study at first hand political, security and living conditions in Iraq, strengthen contacts with the various political forces, principally the IGC, and other sections of the Iraqi people in order to become acquainted with their views and suggestions for the building Iraqi state institutions, restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people and ending the foreign presence, and to understand the views of Iraqis on the anticipated Arab role in contributing to the political process and reconstruction efforts, I dispatched a high-level delegation from the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States to Iraq, led by my Assistant for Political Affairs, Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli, from 18 to 30 December 2003. The visit included Baghdad and the surrounding area, the Governorate of Anbar, the towns of Ramadi, Falluja, Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniya in the Middle Euphrates, the region of Kurdistan, southern Iraq, Basra and environs.

95. The delegation met with:

- The Chairman and Members of the IGC and a number of ministers;
- Representatives of political parties, tribal chiefs, intellectuals, professionals and representatives of civil society organizations;
- Religious authorities (Shia, chief among them Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sistani, and the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars);
- The leaders of the Kurdistan region, Messrs Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani;
- Heads of Arab missions (liaison offices).

96. The delegation also visited several national facilities (Baghdad Museum, Baghdad University, a hospital, school and the Association of Political Prisoners). It submitted a report on the mission which I sent to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 14 January 2004, including a summary of the ideas and views the delegation heard and the following conclusions:

- The Iraqi people are living through a period of extreme hardship following the collapse of central authority after the demise of the former regime; they are compelled to coexist with the occupation and suffer from the accumulated effects of the wars and sanctions they have been subjected to; they exist in an atmosphere dominated by the absence of security and the aggravation of problems of life, such as unemployment and numerous water, electricity and petrol crises, etc;
- The existence of a state of tension and bitterness arising from raids, detentions and humiliations, in addition to the terrorist bombings that take the lives of innocent civilians;
- Unanimity among Iraqis that the foreign forces contributed to the creation of the out-of-control security situation by demobilizing the army and dissolving all state institutions without providing alternatives;

- The desire of Iraqis to end the foreign occupation of Iraq, even if there are different visions of the mechanisms by which this might be achieved; this is the issue that the Arab contingent and the international community, under the leadership of the United Nations, should help with;
- There is diversity in the proposals of various sections of Iraqi society on how to build the political future of Iraq: will it be a federal state, in which case what will the borders be, or will it be a centralized state? They nevertheless desire a cohesive national fabric and are aware of the need to avoid stirring up sectarian rivalries. In this regard, they complained about some Arab satellite channels, accusing them of highlighting religious and ethnic sectarianism;
- Iraqis disagree on the subject of the resistance to the occupation forces: some think it is legitimate, some believe that peaceful means should be followed and some describe it in whole or in part as terrorism. In this connection, I would like to point out that I have condemned vigorously all the bombings that have occurred in Iraq targeting Iraqi civilians as terrorist crimes that affect the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians, sow the seeds of sectarian strife and damage Iraqi national interests;
- The actions of the former regime and effects of the wars that Iraq has experienced have left a deep impact on Iraqis vis-à-vis the neighbouring States. Accordingly, they stress the need for cooperation with neighbouring States to control the borders with Iraq, follow a positive course in dealing with the situation in Iraq and participate in restoring security and stability to the country;
- They warn of the consequences of transforming Iraq into an arena for the settling of regional and international accounts and conflicts;
- They look forward to the United Nations taking a central role in the political process;
- They request the Arab States to assist in establishing institutions, either during the interim or the final phase for example, supervising elections and drafting the Constitution;
- Iraqis criticize the League of Arab States and its Member States for failing to help them during the rule of the former regime, the war and the occupation. This criticism varies in accordance with political, religious and regional points of view in Iraq. They call for a clear Arab role with a greater presence in the Iraqi arena, particularly in relation to the political process, reconstruction and assisting them to bring about a convergence of Iraqi opinion in the current phase, which is beset by dangers and grave challenges. Iraqis point out their pan-Arab stance toward Arab issues.

97. The delegation of the League of Arab States conveyed several proposals made by Iraqis for example:

- The continued presence of the League of Arab States and its agencies, as well as Arab delegations, on the Iraqi scene;
- The appointment of a special envoy of the Secretary-General for Iraq or the opening of an office of the League in Iraq to liaise with the various Iraqi

political forces and international parties, particularly the United Nations, to contribute to the political process, the ending of the occupation and establishing the political institutions of the Iraqi State, such as an Iraqi national Government and drafting the Constitution, etc.;

- To provide various forms of support and assistance to Iraqis in all areas and to train groups of Iraqi administrative personnel in the Arab States;
- To help Iraq recover antiquities looted from its museums;
- For the Arab States to facilitate the travel and residence of Iraqis;
- To help Iraqis uncover mass graves and discover the identity of victims;
- To request the Arab States to unburden the Iraqi people and not hinder the reconstruction process, by cancellation of Iraqi debt;
- To deal with the Kurdish issue in a fresh light, taking into account Kurdish distinctiveness, within the framework of a unified and democratic Iraq.

98. Within the framework of collaboration with the United Nations, I sent a letter on 19 January 2004 to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, informing him of the most significant points and observations contained in the report of the delegation of the League of Arab States, following its mission to Iraq in December 2003. In the letter, I explained the following:

- The Iraqi people are facing a critical stage in their modern history following the grave events they have experienced, the consequences of which they continue to face.
- Despite the difficulties of current circumstances, Iraqis are unanimously agreed upon the need to remain a united people and land and to resist any threats to their national unity or sectarian and ethnic fabric.
- The majority of Iraqis wish the various political forces to enter into a national dialogue to reach understanding and an acceptable settlement regarding the new form of the Iraqi State in which all the people will enjoy the same rights and duties.
- Most Iraqis expressed the desire to express freely their political will directly and without resort to complicated mechanisms giving any party the right to object to their elected choice.
- Iraqis look forward to international and regional organizations, chief among them the United Nations and the League of Arab States, playing an active and leading role in assisting them during the political process that is expected to lead to an elected national government and the adoption of a new, permanent Constitution.
- Iraqis looked forward to an active international role in helping them with reconstruction.
- The need was expressed for greater cooperation from neighbouring countries to assist Iraq with the current problems.

99. I received a letter from Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the end of January 2004 in which he expressed his thanks for my two aforementioned letters and appreciation of the United Nations for the League of

Arab States having undertaken to send a high-level delegation to Iraq in the current circumstances and the important contacts held there, which he described as having enabled him to reach a deeper understanding of the needs, anxieties and expectations of the Iraqi people. The Secretary-General of the United Nations likewise advised in his letter, which I distributed to the Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the time, that he would send a team to Iraq to look into what might be done to help reach national accord, permitting stability and legality to be achieved in the phase through which the country is currently passing. I continued the dialogue with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on developments in the Iraqi situation on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland on 24 January 2004.

100. Meeting at ministerial level on 29 February 2004, the Follow-up and Action Committee studied carefully the new conditions in Iraq and their present and probable repercussions vis-à-vis the overall Arab and regional situation. The Committee recommended the following:

- The importance of reaffirming the collective Arab commitment to helping the Iraqi people overcome the obstacles of the interim phase, ensuring they determine their political future by themselves, away from external interference, thus guaranteeing the preservation of their national unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity;
- The need to make efforts to reinforce the Arab presence in the Iraqi arena and open channels of dialogue and communication with the various political, religious and nationalist groupings that make up the Iraqi people, in order to encourage engagement in a comprehensive national dialogue on a national formulation to achieve the transfer of authority, restoration of sovereignty, an end to the occupation and rebuild the political institutions of state within the framework of preservation of the unity of Iraq and the religious and ethnic plurality it enjoys, accommodating everyone in the political process and ensuring their participation in determining the political future of Iraq;
- The need for effective Arab engagement in providing urgent humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people, particularly in the areas of health, education and basic services, and in contributing effectively to international efforts to rebuild the Iraqi economy and rehabilitate its institutions and basic utilities;
- To extend thanks to the Secretary-General for his initiative in dispatching a mission from the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States to visit Iraq in December 2003 to study developments in the situation and open channels of dialogue and communication with the Iraqi people; to express appreciation of the mission's efforts in carrying out this task and to call for consideration of the possibility of a permanent mission of the League or of appointing a representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq.

The issue of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons in Iraq

101. The Secretariat-General is anxious to deal with the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons and the restoration of Kuwaiti property and archives. The Secretariat-General is following up this humanitarian issue with the concerned bodies in the State of Kuwait. It is, likewise, monitoring the work of the United Nations and its High-Level Coordinator, Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, whose mission

has been extended by the Security Council and who is anxious to coordinate his efforts with the Arab League. It is also monitoring the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Tripartite Commission and its technical sub-committee. The Secretariat-General is anxious for this issue to remain on the agenda of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights and the Secretary-General has devoted a special section to it in his report on the situation in Iraq.

102. The Secretariat-General has expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and condemned the killing of these prisoners by the authorities of the former Iraqi regime. It considers these acts to be gross violations of human rights and of Arab principles and values.

The Conference on Iraqi National Accord

103. At international conferences to study the Iraqi issue, I submitted a number of proposals to contribute to bringing about accord between Iraqis in order to preserve Iraq, protect its unity and independence and provide a consensus enabling the success of the political process. These proposals were crystallized in my initiative at the Sharm El-Sheikh conference on Iraq on 13 November 2004 and included the following elements:

- The need to achieve national accord in Iraq by convening an inclusive Iraq conference to this end;
- Dealing with the foreign military presence from the standpoint that its presence is temporary and that agreement upon a timetable for the withdrawal of the foreign military forces be based upon the letter and spirit of resolution 1546 (2004) of the Security Council;
- Agreement upon a leading role for the United Nations in supervising implementation of the political process and other issues, including reconstruction in Iraq;
- Accelerating the process of reconstruction in Iraq, providing essential services to Iraqis within a framework of transparency and credibility and requesting Iraq's creditor States to reduce or cancel its debts;
- Affirmation of the role of the League of Arab States in the political process in Iraq, as the principal regional organization to which Iraq belongs and given the sense of equilibrium and confidence that this role may produce among the Iraqi people and Arab public opinion, and to strive to provide an Arab network of assurance for any political process that, it is hoped, will have an impact and effect both inside and outside Iraq;
- To warn against the consequence of any miscalculation leading to the creation of sectarian strife in Iraq threatening its unity and regional integrity and the impact thereof on the security of the region as a whole, and to affirm the Arab role in obviating these risks.

104. The first six months of 2005 witnessed a reversal of the security situation in Iraq. Tension increased and there were fears of an escalation of fighting on ethnic or sectarian grounds leading to Iraq sliding toward civil war. Despite clear movement toward implementing the measures of Security Council resolution 1546 (8 June 2004), within the framework of which the peace process was being

conducted, several political actors and a section of Iraqi society were absent from this process, either of their own volition or due to circumstances that prevented or made difficult their participation.

105. As the Arab identity of Iraq had become a subject of contention, I intervened and called for amendment to the wording of an article in the Constitution relating to the Iraq's identity; this article was amended to an acceptable wording.

106. The lack of a clear Arab position for dealing with developments in Iraq was a major difficulty, calling for Arab action and for talks and consultations to be held that resulted in the initiative of His Excellency Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt calling for an Arab Summit conference in extraordinary session to be convened at Sharm El-Sheikh on 3 August 2005 to study the Iraqi issue. However, before the arrival of Arab leaders in Sharm El-Sheikh, the Arab and Islamic worlds were taken unawares by the death of King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, may he rest in peace, and the Summit meeting was cancelled.

107. During the meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level on 8 September 2005, a Ministerial Committee on Iraq was formed, consisting of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Secretary-General. The Committee drafted a strategy for assisting Iraq and following up Arab Summit and ministerial council resolutions in this regard. This Committee held its first ministerial meeting in Jeddah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 2 October 2005, pursuant to an initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and requested the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to visit Iraq and meet with different elements of the Iraqi population to discuss the convening of a Conference on Iraqi National Accord to be agreed by the Iraqi Government and the leaderships of political and other influential forces. I accepted this request as an essential, formal, Arab assignment.

108. In the light of this assignment, I undertook a five-day visit to Iraq from 20 to 24 October 2005, prepared for in advance by my dispatch of a delegation from the Secretariat-General headed by Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli.

109. During my visit to Iraq, I held a series of intensive meetings and talks with officials of the Government of Iraq, various Iraqi political actors, religious authorities, tribal leaders, former military leaders and civil society representatives on the subject of a Conference on Iraqi National Accord to be held under the auspices of the League of Arab States and bringing together all political forces representative of the structure of Iraqi society. My talks focused on the following:

- The aim of the Arab initiative is to hold a conference on Iraqi dialogue and national accord under the auspices of the League of Arab States to stop the bloodshed, put an end to strife, conflicts and divisions, move toward an accord that may require mutual concessions in the national interests, achieve comprehensive participation in the political process to rebuild state institutions on the basis of national accord, preserve the unity of Iraq, maintain its independence and achieve the accord necessary to build the new Iraq with the consent of Iraqis of their own free will.

- It is an expression of a collective Arab wish to crystallize an effective Arab stance to assist Iraqis of all persuasions without discrimination or bias to one party at the expense of another.

- It proceeds from the standpoint of Iraq as a pivotal state in the regional Arab construct and a pillar of stability in the region and that Iraqi society, in all its components and stripes is a part of the Arab nation in all its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, which must be viewed as a source of strength and civilizational richness.

- It is an opportunity to create a suitable atmosphere enabling all Iraqis to hold a candid and direct dialogue among themselves in order to come up with an accord that serves the higher national interest of Iraq and resist attempts to fan sectarian and nationalist sentiments.

- It does not conflict with the track of the current political process adopted by the Security Council.

- It considers that the setting of a timetable and course for ending the presence of foreign forces from Iraq will, of itself, provide confidence factors and disseminate a spirit of hope and belief in the construction of the new Iraq.

- It is designed to contribute to the provision of an Arab network of assurance, supported regionally and internationally, to assist Iraq in bearing the burdens of the current transitional phase with all its challenges.

- Allowance has been made for the conference to get underway during the period between the referendum on the Constitution on 15 October 2005 and the legislative elections scheduled for 15 December 2005.

- A period of preparation is required and I call upon all components of the Iraqi body politic to participate in a preliminary meeting to be held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo during the second half of November 2005.

Points of agreement as I have understood them on the part of Iraqis regarding the initiative and conference organization mechanism:

- The Arab initiative to convene a conference for Iraqi dialogue under the auspices of the League of Arab States and attended by the members of the Ministerial Committee on Iraq and representatives of States and regional and international organizations, is welcomed.

- There is agreement on the formation of a preparatory committee for the conference, composed of approximately 50 members representing Iraqi political forces (the committee that was expanded to include a large number of representatives of political forces and sections of Iraqi society taking part in the preparatory meeting held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States).

- The preparatory committee held meetings at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo during the second half of November 2005, where it drew up the conference agenda, mechanisms, date and venue. The substance of the conference, terms of reference and mechanisms will originate from the proposals, ideas and suggestions of the Iraqis themselves at the preparatory meeting.

- There is unanimous agreement among the political forces on the condemnation of terrorist operations and acts of violence intending to destroy holy places and property, kill and terrorize innocent civilians, stir up strife and undermine security and stability in Iraq.
- All Iraqi political forces concerned for the unity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq, who reject terrorism against all sections of the Iraqi people and strive to build a new, united and independent Iraq, based upon the rights of citizenship and equality among all its people in respect of rights and duties, and the restoration of full Iraqi sovereignty, shall participate in this conference.
- The call for the cessation of all hostile acts with effect from a date to be specified in order to provide a suitable environment to ensure the success of the preparatory meeting and, likewise, of the conference, and to work to restore security and stability to Iraq.

Important points raised:

(a) The following represents the stance of the IGC:

- Exclusion of Ba'athists and terrorists from any Iraqi national dialogue (terrorists, of course, will not be invited; as for Ba'athists, it is appropriate to deal with them within the framework of a Constitution that does not exclude them altogether from participating in political activity; only those indicted for acts against the Iraqi people during Ba'ath rule and symbols of the former regime should be excluded);
- The Arab States adjacent to Iraq must control their borders and prevent terrorists from infiltrating into Iraq (this is currently being done);
- The Arab States must direct their media to assist Iraqis in calming matters in order to put an end to incitement to killing and terrorism in Iraq.

(b) The leader of the Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance, Sayyid Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, requested that the Arab States condemn unequivocally the actions of Zarqawi directed against Shi'ites (this has been done).

(c) Sayyid Muqtada al-SaDr set the following conditions:

- Formal condemnation of the crimes of the occupation, the terrorist crimes against civilians and holy places and the actions of the so-called Zarqawi;
- Formal condemnation of the actions of the former President and the demand for his execution or fair trial by honourable Iraqis;
- Limitation of the involvement of the League of Arab States in Iraqi affairs to politics, with no deployment of armed forces, which will be considered as forces of occupation.

This issue was dealt with and the representative of Sayyid Muqtada al-SaDr attended the preparatory meeting at League headquarters.

(d) The Association of Muslim Scholars, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Harith al-Dari, agreed to participate in the Conference on Iraqi National Accord but was of the opinion that there are fundamentals that must be observed in any process of national accord namely:

- The setting of an internationally-guaranteed timetable for the withdrawal of the occupation forces, considered as the root of the problem;
- While terrorism in all its forms is rejected as a crime, Iraqi resistance is a legitimate right;
- Restoration of the Iraqi army after purging it of bad elements in accordance with a mechanism to be agreed subsequently.

110. This initiative received a positive response, was welcomed at the regional and international level and supported by the United Nations, the European Union, Russia and China. The indicators that emerged from the United States and Great Britain during my visit to Iraq made it apparent that they would not oppose the efforts of the League of Arab States to achieve Iraqi national accord.

111. This visit likewise represented a broad Iraqi welcome at all levels for, and great hope in, the Arab role as represented by the League of Arab States in helping Iraq out of these difficult conditions.

112. On the basis of the encouraging results of this visit and in implementation of the resolutions of the Ministerial Committee on Iraq formed under aforementioned resolution 6553 (8 September 2005) of the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States held in Jeddah on 2 October 2005, I called for the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord from 19 to 21 November 2005 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, with the participation of Iraqi political forces from different sections of the Iraqi people.

113. The conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Minister of State and personal representative of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and President of the Arab Summit and Mr. Ashraf Qazi, Special Representative for Iraq of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

114. The opening session was attended by Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs sitting on the Ministerial Committee on Iraq and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lebanese Republic with Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, Advisor to the President of the Republic of the Sudan, the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, the representative of the Arab Maghreb Union, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, the ambassadors of the Permanent Member States of the Security Council, the Permanent Delegates to the League of Arab States, a number of ambassadors of foreign States linked by memoranda of understanding to the League of Arab States, the representative of the European Union and representatives from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Islamic Development Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

115. Following the inaugural session, the first working session began with a general discussion in which different Iraqi points of view on the situation in Iraq were heard. In the light of these discussions, two working groups were formed, the first to study preparations for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, chaired by Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Minister of State and personal representative of His Excellency President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the second, to study confidence building measures, chaired by Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, Advisor to the President of the Republic of the Sudan. A second working session was then held in which the recommendations of both groups were reviewed. Under my chairmanship, a consultation session was held to study the items proposed for inclusion in the final communiqué, and a final session was held to discuss and adopt the draft final communiqué issued by the meeting.

116. The meeting agreed to form a reduced committee, the Follow-up and Preparation Committee, to monitor preparations for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, consisting of representatives of Iraqi political forces with the participation of the League of Arab States and in cooperation with the United Nations.

117. The final communiqué issued by the meeting reflected consensus on a number of key principles, represented by commitment to the unity, sovereignty, freedom and independence of Iraq; non-intervention in its internal affairs; respect for the will of the Iraqi people and their democratic choices within a pluralist and federalist and framework and their right to determine their future by themselves; affirmation of the desire to make available the best conditions for holding the Conference on Iraqi National Accord; that the Iraqi people are looking forward to the day when foreign troops leave Iraq and to building their own army and security forces; that resistance is a legitimate right of all peoples and terrorism does not represent legitimate resistance; condemnation of terrorism, acts of violence and kidnapping targeting Iraqis and the demand that it be opposed immediately; condemnation of the charge of unbelief against the Iraqi people; the call for the release of innocent detainees who have not been convicted in a court of law; the demand for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops by putting in place an immediate national programme for rebuilding the armed forces; respect for all sections of the Iraqi people; and non-obstruction of the peace process. The participants likewise called upon the Arab States to support Iraq in various areas, principally debt cancellation, contributing to the training and upgrading of Iraqi administrative personnel, reinforcing the Arab diplomatic presence in Iraq, playing an effective role in the reconstruction of Iraq and helping to control the borders. The participants agreed to hold the Conference on Iraqi National Accord during the last week of February or first week of March 2006 in Baghdad. They likewise decided a number of crucial points relating to the draft conference agenda, the criteria for participation and a number of confidence building measures during the coming phase.

118. To a considerable extent, this conference provided an opportunity to remove many of the doubts and anxieties among several Iraqi political forces in regard to the relationship of the Arab States with Iraq and their vision of the new Iraq. There was affirmation of, on the one hand, the importance of activating the Arab role in Iraq in the coming phase and on the other, the commitment of these forces to Iraq's fundamental ties to its Arab environment. The extent of the political, economic and media support Iraqis expect from the Arab States and the Arab role in the desired

accord process will represent one of the bases on which the results of this meeting in terms of Arab-Iraqi relations will build.

119. The discussions revealed some difference in the views of the political forces on a number of matters regarding the situation in Iraq, including the question of the foreign presence in Iraq. Despite agreement on the gradual ending of this presence, some thought that the foreign troops represent the principal cause of the hardships from which Iraq is suffering, while others believe it is important for this presence to continue in view of the instability and terrorism and that it is not possible to end the presence until this situation stops, which depends upon the rehabilitation of the security and military institutions and enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities.

120. The legitimacy of the resistance represented one of the major issues on which lengthy discussions were held before the form of agreement in the final communiqué was arrived at.

121. The follow-up mechanism that emerged from this meeting will receive final form in the light of the results of the legislative elections held on 15 December 2005 and the formation of the new government.

122. The most important results of the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord were as follows:

- Agreement on the date and venue of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord; working to widen participation in the conference; agreement on a number of practical measures to build confidence during the coming phase; the creation of a mechanism for follow-up and preparation for the conference, represented by a reduced committee of representatives of the main political forces, with the participation of the League of Arab States and in cooperation with the United Nations;

- Affirmation by the participating parties of commitment to the basic principles of: commitment to the unity, sovereignty, freedom and independence of Iraq, the impermissibility of intervention in its internal affairs, agreeing to condemn terrorism and treat operations that target the Iraqi people as non-representative of legitimate resistance and affirmation that resistance is a legitimate right of peoples;

- The Iraqi political forces called upon the Arab States to support Iraq in various fields, principally debt cancellation, contributing to the training and upgrading of Iraqi administrative personnel, reinforcing the Arab diplomatic presence in Iraq, playing an effective role in the reconstruction of Iraq and helping to control the borders;

- The discussions made plain the agreement of the various participating political forces on the need to end the foreign presence in accordance with a timetable and by putting in place an immediate national programme for the retraining, re-equipping and rearming of the armed forces to enable them to carry out their tasks.

123. The meeting succeeded in bringing together Iraqi political actors representing different sections of the Iraqi populace, under the auspices of the League of Arab States for a dialogue and exchange of views on the future of Iraq, in discussions characterized by frankness and the desire to put the common and national interest first.

124. This meeting represented a positive first step toward the convening of a Conference on Iraqi National Accord, although success in achieving this goal remains conditional on the extent of the commitment of all parties to the agreed confidence building measures and to applying these on the ground in order to provide the appropriate and necessary environment for holding a successful conference leading to achievement of the hoped-for goals. It is similarly conditional on the amount of Arab, regional and international support for the national reconciliation track and means of integrating this with the political process to achieve security, stability and an end to violence in Iraq.

125. The agreement of the participating political forces on the final communiqué, even if it did not wholly satisfy their demands or fully represent their vision on a number of issues, was nevertheless reached on the basis of the desire of all to respond to the Arab endeavour and make certain concessions to reach national accord to enable Iraq to emerge from the crisis it is currently going through. These concessions represented a positive development in the stances of the various Iraqi political forces.

126. In the context of the preparation for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, I requested Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, my personal representative monitoring the Iraqi accord process, to visit Iraq to consult with the leaderships of the various groups in collaboration with the United Nations, which had played an important role in the efforts to prepare for and bring about the success of the preparatory meeting for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, particularly after the elections and the progress made in forming the Iraqi Government. Dr. Ismail visited Iraq from 19 to 22 February and submitted a report, of which the most important points are:

- Preparation and follow-up committee: agreement was reached on mandating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq to cooperate with the League of Arab States to undertake the tasks of the Preparation and Follow-up Committee for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord;
- Conference venue: the necessity of holding the conference in Baghdad was stressed by all and the Iraqi parliament building was proposed as a venue; the subject was referred to the Preparation and Follow-up Committee to determine a suitable venue;
- Timing of conference: the first week of June was scheduled for the convening of the conference; the Preparation and Follow-up Committee was charged with determining the days on which the conference would be held during the said week.

127. The situation worsened with the attack on the shrines of the martyred Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hasan al-Askari in Samarra and the systematic or random killings of Iraqis on the basis of religious or sectarian allegiance. This is a grave development and, with Ambassador Ben Helli, I contacted urgently the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and numerous leaders, including Sheikh Harith al-Dari, Adnan Dulaymi and others. It became clear that there was a crisis of confidence, paralleled by the feeling that it was essential to move toward the restoration of national concord. Consultations, in which the League of Arab States is taking part, are still being held.

128. The Council of the League of Arab States at delegate level condemned this malicious attack on 23 February 2006. It was similarly condemned on 4 March 2006

by the 125th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level, which called upon the Iraqi people of all persuasions, their political leaders and religious authorities to oppose acts of violence and terrorism, exercise self-control and not allow such evil acts to undermine Iraq's unity, security and stability. It called upon all Member States to contribute to the repair of houses of worship and mosques and expressed its gratitude to the State of Kuwait for the financial support provided for this purpose.

129. The 125th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level (4 March 2006) agreed to my proposal to appoint Ambassador Mukhtar Lamani as head of the League's office in Iraq and to take all the measures necessary to open the office, liaise with the Iraqi people and political forces, strengthen the Arab presence in Iraq and help it to emerge from this tense phase.

c. The islands of the United Arab Emirates occupied by Iran

130. The Secretariat-General has accorded the subject of Iran's occupation of the three Arab islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) proper attention and I have been anxious to raise this subject in the course of meetings with regional and international officials whom I have met at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General and elsewhere. I have affirmed the firm and absolute Arab position relating to the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands, support for all the peaceful measures the United Arab Emirates has taken to recover them and requested Iran to desist from de facto imposition, refrain from any measures upsetting the islands' demographic composition and follow peaceful means of resolving the dispute in accordance with the principles and tenets of international law, including referral of the issue to the International Court of Justice.

131. Otherwise, I sent letters to international, regional and sub-regional organizations and groupings, requesting support for the Arab claim in respect of Iran's occupation of the three Arab islands in the Arabian Gulf of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa that belong to the United Arab Emirates and calling upon Iran to respond to the repeated calls to reach a peaceful resolution of this question. The Secretariat-General sent the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level and ministerial level pertaining to this subject to the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, the Arab Maghreb Union and the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union requesting these sisterly groupings and federations to affirm the absolute right of the United Arab Emirates to and sovereignty over the three islands.

132. At the same time, I sent letters enclosing the text of the resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the Security Council affirming the demand of the Council of the League of Arab States for this issue to remain before the Security Council until Iran ends its occupation of the three Arab islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) and the United Arab Emirates recovers full sovereignty over them. In this regard, we point out that the Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations sent letters to the President of the Security Council in response to my letters to the Security Council, seeking to repeat the baseless Iranian claims in justification of the occupation of the Arab islands.

133. The statement issued at the South American and Arab Countries Summit in Brasilia on 11 May 2005 included an invitation to the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the initiative of the United Arab Emirates to reach a peaceful solution to

the question of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa belonging to the United Arab Emirates, through dialogue and direct negotiations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and tenets of international law.

134. Iran has maintained its policy of altering the population and demographic composition of these islands, the latest aspect of which is its determination to erect a monument on Abu Musa.

135. Accordingly, we consider it necessary that this matter be raised with Iran by the League of Arab States within a bilateral and a multilateral framework, as Iran's continued occupation of the three Arab islands since 1971 will have a negative impact on the building of solid Arab-Iranian relations based upon the tenets of good neighbourliness, Islamic brotherhood, shared cultural and historical heritage and future strategic vision that ought to govern Arab-Iranian relations and their development.

d. Support for peace, development and unity in the Republic of the Sudan

136. Desiring to support the path of peace and reconciliation in the Sudan and in view of the great importance this issue has for the Arab world and for Africa, the subject of the Sudan has remained a permanent item on the agenda of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit and ministerial levels, in the activity of the Secretary-General and work of the Secretariat-General, with the goal of actively assisting to bring about a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the Sudanese issue.

i. The issue of the Southern Sudan

137. After the signing of the Machakos Protocol in July 2002, which was welcomed by the League of Arab States at the time, the League's efforts involved two basic aspects. The first of these related to advancing the peace process and negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and urging them to conclude and sign a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The second was to support development and reconstruction in war-torn areas. After visiting the Southern Sudan, I participated in the signing ceremony for the Nairobi peace declaration on 5 June 2004. I sent a delegation to the southern city of Rumbek, as guests of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, to affirm the commitment of the League of Arab States and Member States to the course of peace and the resolve of the League and its institutions to contribute actively to the development of the Southern Sudan and regions affected by war and make Sudanese unity an attractive, voluntary option.

138. On 5 June 2004, I participated in the signing ceremony in Nairobi of the Framework Agreement for peace between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, delivering a speech in which I affirmed the support of the League of Arab States for the peace agreement, the efforts of the League, its organizations and funds and of the Arab States to preserve the territorial integrity of the Sudan and making unity an attractive option for the people of the Southern Sudan.

139. During my visit to the Sudan from 26 to 28 December 2004, I was received by His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who expressed the determination of the Government of the Sudan to reach a final peace agreement very shortly with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the importance of the League of Arab States being a member of the committees monitoring and implementing this agreement. The meeting dealt with developments in the situation in Darfur and the desire of the Government of the Sudan to reach a peaceful resolution of the crisis through dialogue in Abuja with the rebel groups.

140. In response to the invitation of the Government of Kenya, I participated, together with a number of Arab and African leaders, in the signing ceremony for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, in Nairobi on 9 January 2005. I witnessed the agreement as a representative of the League of Arab States, alongside representatives from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the United States of America, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. I affirmed in my address the continuing role of the League of Arab States in the reconstruction and development of the Sudan and in participating in the mechanisms and committees monitoring and implementing the agreement.

141. The peace agreement was based upon agreed political, legal and security arrangements, whereby the Southern Sudan became an entity known as the Region of the South, with a government, parliament and Constitution. It had a traditional banking system different from that in the north of the country, which uses the Islamic banking system and applies Islamic Shari'a law. The South has its own army, too, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, alongside joint forces of the People's Army and the Government Army. In addition, it has a 50% share of oil revenues and has changed from the Sudanese currency of the dinar to the pound, which will be in circulation next June.

142. The first step in implementation of the agreement was a comprehensive ceasefire, which commenced when the final agreement was signed. The comprehensive ceasefire process is divided into phases in the agreement and involves the redeployment of Government forces from the south to the north, the redeployment of the Sudan People's Liberation Army from the east of the Sudan to the south and the disarming of other armed militias. The final phase will commence at the end of the last and final year of the transitional period and continue for a period of six months, involving the establishment of a united, national Sudanese army, in the event of unity.

143. In accordance with the agreement, a new Constitution was adopted, followed by the formation of a new Council of Ministers for the period prior to the general elections (to take place in the middle of the transitional phase). The Council of Ministers will be composed of 30 ministers and 34 ministers of state. Portfolios will be distributed on the basis of a general formula allocating 52% to the National Conference and 28% to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. Other political forces from the north will have a 14%representation and other political forces from the south, 6%. A parliament of two chambers was formed, the lower being a National Assembly with 445 members, in the same proportion as the composition of

the Council of Ministers and the upper, a Council of States with 52 members, representing the country's 26 States.

144. One outstanding issue remains namely, the administration of the capital, Khartoum, by both parties to the peace agreement. The presidency will create a committee to assure the rights of non-Muslims are protected in the national capital but the two parties have yet to resolve the issue of the administration of Khartoum. Other outstanding issues are the reorganization of the security apparatus, the amendment of more than sixty laws and the administration of the oil-rich Abyei region, one of three marginal regions included in the peace agreement after an international committee recommended a redrawing of the region to give a part of it to the South.

It is worth mentioning that a number of items relating to political and constitutional aspects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have been implemented.

145. The signing of the peace agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on 9 January 2005 was a significant turning point in the course of events in terms of the Sudan as one state and people. The agreement included a referendum to be held after six years on the destiny of the Southern Sudan. The enormous challenges this poses to the Sudan are matched by the strategic challenges posed on the pan-Arab front. The fulfilment of Arab responsibilities and demands requires Arab cooperation in order to create an environment attractive and favourable to the option of Sudanese unity because the capabilities of the Sudan under the current difficult circumstances will not enable it alone to implement a development plan for the Southern Sudan making unity the single, attractive option for the citizens of the South. The Arab role thus becomes vital for the preservation of the unity of the Sudan and to avert the risks of secession, lest it establish a precedent or spread to other Arab or African regions.

146. In support of the peace agreement signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, I took part in the signing ceremony for the interim Constitution, the constitutional swearing-in of the Presidency and the start of the transitional period, in the Sudanese capital on 9 July 2005. The ceremony was attended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, leaders of the IGAD States and representatives of international and regional organizations. During the ceremony, I affirmed the determination of the League of Arab States to continue its efforts on the political and development fronts to support the course of peace and ensure implementation of the agreement. I also participated in the funeral of Dr. John Garang, First Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan and President of the Government of Southern Sudan, in the city of Juba on 6 August 2005. Although the death of Dr. Garang in a helicopter crash was an enormous shock and challenge to the peace process, the Sudanese people and leadership in both north and south were able to overcome the effects of the accident. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement chose Mr. Silva Kiir Mayardit as leader and he subsequently assumed the position of First Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan, pursuant to the terms of the peace agreement.

147. I met with Mr. Silva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan and President of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Government of the Southern Sudan, on 1 September 2005 in Cairo. The talks dealt with the commitment to and implementation of the terms of the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement and the subject of the reconstruction of the Southern Sudan. Agreement was reached on holding the Fourth Coordination Meeting of Arab States, investment funds and organizations for reconstruction and development in the Southern Sudan, in Khartoum or Juba during 2006.

148. On the development front, it may be said that real success has been achieved through the coordination meetings held by the League of Arab States to encourage the system of Joint Arab Action to take a prominent role in contributing to the development of the Southern Sudan and making unity an attractive option. Arab finance and investment funds and specialized Arab organizations and federations within Arab ministerial councils took part in these meetings. The total value of projects under implementation in Southern Sudan was more than US$ 200,000,000, in roads, water, electricity and services, particularly education and health. It may be sufficient to draw attention to the Peace Road project between the towns of Renk and Malakal, linking the north of the Sudan with the south and costing US$ 150,000,000, funded equally by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Saudi Fund for Development. At these meetings, Arab undertakings were also given to rehabilitate the river transport sector and railway sector and to finance investment projects in the industrial, agricultural and food industries sectors. Preparation is currently underway for the Fourth Coordination Meeting of Arab States, investment funds and organizations for reconstruction and development in the Southern Sudan and other war-torn areas before the end of the year.

149. In view of the absence or exclusion of Arab civil society organizations from the Southern Sudan, the League of Arab States has encouraged Arab non-governmental organizations to provide technical, humanitarian and development assistance to the Southern Sudan and help protect persons displaced and affected by war. It may be noted in this regard that the workshop held in Cairo in May 2003 brought together for the first time Sudanese civil society organizations from regions in the Southern Sudan controlled either by the Government of the Sudan or the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. This workshop resulted in a programme to support capacity building in the Southern Sudan which the League of Arab States is seeking to fund in collaboration with Arab non-governmental organizations. This mission is extremely important, given that Western and church organizations monopolize the work in the Southern Sudan and have a negative influence on the choice for unity.

150. Aware of the important role the Arab private sector can play in the development of the Southern Sudan, a conference to promote investment projects in the Southern Sudan was held by the League of Arab States on 20 February 2006, in which upwards of 300 Arab businessmen and investors and representatives of Arab chambers of commerce, credit funds and specialized organizations took part. The Government of the Sudan delivered a presentation on the agricultural, industrial and service projects it wished to promote, together with investment guarantees and Sudanese laws. A working group – a follow-up committee – was formed to prepare for the Second Arab Conference on Development and Investment this year in the Southern Sudan, in collaboration with the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

151. In the context of support for peace and the development and reconstruction efforts throughout the Sudan, the Arab Summit in Tunis called for Member States

and Arab credit funds to address the issue of the Sudanese debt they hold, given that 40% of the Sudan's debt is held by Arab States and funds. The Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, one of the League of Arab States' specialized organizations, called for the creation of a fund to guarantee investments in the Southern Sudan accelerate the pace of Arab action in the development of the Southern Sudan and provide adequate guarantees for secure investment.

152. At the invitation of the World Bank, the Secretariat-General took part in two meetings of the joint international mission to determine the needs of the Sudan in Nairobi, from 6 to 9 September 2004. It also took part in the IGAD forum on the Sudan, held in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, on 27 and 28 September 2004, in preparation for the donors' conference to be held there. The Sudanese parties (the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement) presented a joint paper containing the immediate needs of both the Northern and Southern Sudan and I circulated these to Member States.

153. The 17th session of the Council of Arab Transport Ministers adopted resolution 238 (24 November 2004) supporting implementation of railway projects in the Southern Sudan. It affirmed the importance of implementing the desired railway projects in the Southern Sudan to achieve development and link the north of the country with the south. It recommended that international and Arab donor entities finance economic, technical and other feasibility studies on these projects as a step toward implementation. It also recommended that a memorandum of the Sudanese Ministry of Transport on the desired railway projects in the Southern Sudan be forwarded to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) for presentation to Arab finance funds and institutions during their coordination meeting, of which AFESD will assume the secretariat.

154. At its 35th meeting from 6 to 8 December 2004, the Higher Coordinating Committee for Joint Arab Action called upon specialized Arab organizations to refer the subject of support for the Republic of the Sudan to their legislative councils with a view to providing technical and humanitarian assistance through specific programmes, to provide immediate humanitarian assistance, if possible, to prepare an integrated and specific plan for the participation of the institutions of Joint Arab Action in the reconstruction and development of the Sudan and for each of the institutions of Joint Arab Action to prepare an integrated and specific plan for its participation in reconstruction and development in the Sudan within its field of specialization, to include what has been and will be provided within the framework of this plan and the requirements for implementation.

155. I participated in the Oslo Donors' Conference on the Sudan on 11 and 12 April 2005, where the Sudanese parties (the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement) presented the development plan prepared by the joint assessment mission to determine the development needs of the Sudan, led by Norway, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. The total cost of the first phase (2005-2007) is estimated at US$ 7.9 billion and the parties requested the provision of the sum of US$ 2.6 billion. It was decided to set up a multi-purpose donors' fund for the reconstruction of the Northern and Southern Sudan, to be managed by the World Bank. At this conference, donors pledged US$ 4.6 billion for the first phase. The final communiqué of the conference included a welcome by the participants of the Arab League undertaking to cooperate closely with the United Nations, the World Bank and other partners in support of

development in the Sudan. Eight Arab States took part in this conference: the Republic of the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Arab Republic of Egypt. The offers of the Arab States to the Sudan were reviewed at the conference and Egypt pledged to provide US$ 10,000,000, of which US$ 1,000,000 would be in cash assistance and the remainder, aid in kind. The Secretariat participated in the preparatory meeting for the Oslo Donors' Conference on the Sudan, held in the Italian capital, Rome on 14 March 2005. I received a letter from the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar advising that he was anxious for the international mission to include an Arab dimension and expressing Qatar's readiness to contribute US$ 1,500,000 to set up and finance the United Nations mission in the Sudan to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

156. Within the framework of follow-up to the results of the Oslo Donors' Conference on the Sudan, a high-level joint delegation comprising representatives from the League of Arab States, the Government of the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the World Bank, the United Nations and the governments of Norway and the Arab Republic of Egypt, will visit several Arab Gulf States to inform Arab decision makers of the Sudan's reconstruction and development needs. The Secretariat-General received approval for this visit from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The visit was postponed due to implementation of the peace agreement and formation of the Government of National Unity; arrangements will be made at a later stage, to be agreed by the various parties concerned.

157. The Secretariat-General participated in the first meeting of the follow-up mechanism to implement the pledges declared at the previous year's Oslo Donors' Conference on the Sudan, at the headquarters of the World Bank on 9 and 10 March 2006. The efforts of the Arab States, the League of Arab States and AFESD in support of peace, development and unity in the Sudan were reviewed. The Minister of International Cooperation of the Arab Republic of Egypt affirmed the Egyptian pledge of US$ 10,000,000 made at the Oslo Donors' Conference on the Sudan, in addition to the establishment of new projects to develop the electricity, water, agriculture and education (by opening a branch of the University of Alexandria in Juba) sectors in the Republic of the Sudan, particularly in the Southern Sudan. The representative of the Saudi Fund for Development presented a review of the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in support of development in the Sudan through contributions to the multi-donor credit fund for the north and the south, provision of a grant, establishment of projects and provision of soft loans, totalling US$ 197,700,000. The final communiqué issued by the meeting referred to the contributions of the League of Arab States and the Arab Republic of Egypt to the multi-donor credit fund for the development of the Northern and Southern Sudan.

158. The fact is that the League of Arab States has taken positive measures on the development of the Southern Sudan, which has become a permanent item in the Joint Arab Action system (Arab finance and investment funds and specialized Arab councils, organizations and sector-based federations). There have been encouraging pledges from States, either to implement development or investment projects or provide financial contributions to the Arab Fund for Development in the Southern Sudan. However, the performance of the Arab system still suffers from the gap that

currently exists in Joint Arab Action between adopting resolutions and failure to implement them. Arab leaders resolved to establish the Arab Fund for Development in the Southern Sudan at the Beirut Summit (2002) with financial contributions from Arab States. To date, however, this Fund has received no contributions worth mentioning. Likewise, the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level adopted a resolution calling upon Member States and Arab finance and investment funds to address the Sudan's Arab debts (which constitute 40% of the Sudan's external debt), to enable the Sudan to confront the challenges of peace and unity. No Arab State, however, has notified the Secretariat-General of the cancellation of such debt.

159. Despite the efforts of the League of Arab States in support of the option of Sudanese unity, a concentrated Arab initiative at the highest levels has become a pressing necessity to preserve the unity of a League Member State whose foundations are subjected to an enormous challenge. This is also a pan-Arab necessity to ensure Arab interests in the region, particularly given that the international and African environment favour carrying out such a role. The Arab system has an historic opportunity to practice preventive diplomacy to protect Arab security, here intertwined with that of the Horn of Africa. The matter only requires an active political will on the part of the Arab States and Arab funding or investment to contribute to the development of the Southern Sudan and other war-torn regions. It will have a great impact upon the triumph of the Sudanese unity option at the ballot box in some five years' time, contribute toward protecting the interests of a League Member State and ensure higher Arab interests. The preoccupation of the Arab States with external challenges and pressures or other regional issues, either in the Arab East or between the Arab North and West, should not mean that the issue of Sudanese unity is left to its fate with the Arab States playing no effective role on the political and development fronts.

ii. The issue of Darfur

160. The Secretariat-General has monitored the Darfur crisis since it erupted. Between 29 April and 15 May 2004, I assigned an official mission to study the situation in Darfur. The task of the mission included visiting the Sudan, where a number of meetings were held with ministers and officials of the Government of the Sudan in Khartoum. In addition, field visits were made to North Darfur (Fasher), South Darfur (Nyala) and West Darfur (Geneina) to examine the situation in the three States and displaced persons camps and to meet with government officials and humanitarian workers. The mission also included a visit to Ethiopia and holding a meeting in Addis Ababa with the Presidency of the African Union and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The mission visited Chad, where it held meetings with officials of the Government of Chad involved with the crisis, in addition to visiting refugee camps in the east of the country. The mission also held meetings with United Nations humanitarian agencies. Its report included a review of the causes and dimensions of the crisis, developments, and the resulting severe humanitarian problems that have left a large number of displaced persons and refugees.

161. At the extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level convened on 8 August 2004, developments of the situation in Darfur were studied in the light of the mission's report in order to establish the facts. This meeting was attended by the Chairperson of the Commission of the

African Union and his special representative for Darfur, as well as Mr. Jan Pronk, special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Nigerian Minister of State representing President Obasanjo, Chairperson of the African Union. The Council resolved to provide full support to the African Union in leading the efforts to solve the crisis, a contingent from Arab Member States of the African Union to support the mission of the ceasefire monitors and troops to protect them in Darfur. At the invitation of His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I visited Abuja in August 2004 to participate, on behalf of the League of Arab States, at the commencement of the Darfur negotiations. The League also participated actively in the mediation efforts between the Government of the Sudan and both the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement, which resulted in the signing of two security and humanitarian protocols on 9 November 2004. The League likewise participated in the joint mechanism of the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations to assess the commitments in their joint statement.

162. A five-way African Summit on Darfur was held in Tripoli, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on 17 October 2004, with the participation of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi, Leader of the Great September Revolution, His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan and His Excellency Idris Deby, President of the Republic of Chad; also participating was Prof. Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union. At the conclusion of the Summit, the leaders welcomed the decision of the Government of the Sudan to increase the numbers of African Union monitors and troops assigned to protect them and expand their mission, appealed to all African States to provide more support and assistance to the African Union and pay their contributions in this respect and requested that the international community fulfil its pledges immediately to support, either financially or logistically, the mission. The leaders and presidents resolved upon the following:

- That the Summit continue to monitor the situation in Darfur through liaison among the leaders and presidents participating in the Summit and by holding periodic meetings among themselves under the auspices of the African Union;
- To entrust Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi with liaising with all parties with a connection to Darfur, to continue to do so until a permanent solution to the problem is reached and to coordinate and consult on an ongoing basis with the leaders and presidents participating in the Summit;
- To reject any foreign intervention from any entity in this purely African matter;
- To charge the Ministers of Foreign Affairs with creating a mechanism to monitor efforts on the ground, within the framework of the African Union, and make proposals to the leaders and presidents; the Arab Republic of Egypt called for the first meeting of this mechanism to be held in Cairo and this was accepted.

163. The League of Arab States participated in the meeting of the Security Council in Nairobi on 19 November 2004 and affirmed to the Security Council that addressing the crisis in Darfur requires:

- Full compliance with the ceasefire agreement signed in N'djamena in April 2004 and commitment to implementation of the security and humanitarian protocols signed in Abuja on 9 November 2004; implementation should be in full to allow for quick results in improving the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur;
- Positive cooperation of the parties with the efforts of the African Union mission and resolve to reach agreement on fundamental principles in the coming round of negotiations, thus opening the way to a comprehensive and final settlement of the crisis;
- Financial, technical and logistic support from the international community for the efforts of the African Union.

164. The Secretariat-General participated in the ministerial meeting of the follow-up committee of the five-way Summit (Tripoli, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, 17 October 2004) at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the Secretariat-General affirmed the importance of cooperation between the League of Arab States and the African Union in dealing with the Darfur crisis, as an embodiment of Arab-African cooperation.

165. The Secretariat-General participated in the meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held on 10 January 2005 in the Gabonese capital of Libreville. The Council discussed the situation in Darfur and issued a final communiqué affirming that a lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur will only be brought about by peaceful, political means, that it is essential to restart peace negotiations between the Sudanese in Abuja in February 2005 and to request that the representatives of the movements be their most prominent leaders. It requested all Sudanese parties to fulfil their commitments and cooperate fully with the African Union, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to prepare conditions for commencing the voluntary return of the refugees and the displaced as soon as possible depending on security conditions but, in any case, before the start of the rainy season.

166. The Secretariat-General participated in the African mini-Summit hosted by Chad on 16 February 2005 and, likewise, in the meeting of the joint committee for the ceasefire in Darfur on 17 February 2005, chaired by the President of the Republic of Chad and attended by Prof. Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union. The final communiqué called for the international community to continue to support African efforts and refrain from any action prejudicial to these efforts, including the imposition of sanctions or deployment of non-African forces in Darfur. It called for the parties to the crisis to cease firing completely and urged the African Union to strengthen its mission in Darfur, while respecting Sudanese sovereignty. The Summit welcomed the measures taken by the Government of the Sudan to withdraw its forces from Darfur on 8 December 2004.

167. I visited the Republic of the Sudan, including the Darfur region, from 2 to 4 June 2005 and met with His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, the First Vice-President and the Minister of Foreign

Affairs. I inspected the situation in the Darfur region and displaced persons camps, accompanied by the Minister of the Interior, representing the President of the Republic of the Sudan and Mr. Jan Pronk, special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Sudan. I witnessed the signing of the peace agreement in the town of Nyala between several tribes in the State of South Darfur and proceeded to the town of Fasher, capital of the State of North Darfur and met with representatives of United Nations humanitarian organizations. I visited the Abu Shawk displaced persons camp and its annex, al-Salam, the hospital of the Saudi Red Crescent society and the Egyptian multi-specialization hospital. I visited the headquarters of the African Union mission in Darfur to affirm the support of the League of Arab States for the efforts of the African Union. The visit enabled me to study the facts of the situation in Darfur region and explain the Arab stance vis-à-vis the Sudanese question as expressed at the Algiers Summit. In the light of the outcome of this visit and anxious to strengthen Arab political, humanitarian and development efforts, the following proposals should be noted:

- **On the humanitarian front**: Although an Arab presence in the region was observed, it needs to be strengthened and given more support in order to assume a greater role in eliminating the humanitarian suffering of the displaced persons and to participate directly and effectively in the return of the displaced and refugees to their villages and farms. In this context, Arab non-governmental organizations could play a significant role and the Secretariat-General could have an effective coordinating role, if the necessary funds were made available. The Secretariat-General has prepared an action plan in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of the Sudan to enable participation in improving humanitarian efforts and this has been circulated to Member States, either to obtain the funding to enable us to carry out our task or for Member States to contribute directly to the implementation of this plan, although within the coordinating framework of the League.

- **Support for the African Union mission in Darfur**: The African Union mission in Darfur plays an important role in strengthening security in the region. I observed a clearly stable security situation in the areas where African Union mission forces were deployed. I also observed an Arab presence among these troops, from the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. These forces, however, whether the protection forces, police forces or ceasefire monitors, need a greater and wider level of participation. Likewise, funding for the deployment of the mission needs support from Arab States. The Donors Conference to Support the African Union Mission in the Sudan, held at Addis Ababa on 26 May 2005, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, witnessed substantial international pledges to enable the African Union to carry out its role. The Arab contribution to these efforts was, however, meagre. Mauritania pledged to provide US$ 50,000 and the League of Arab States, after consulting with the Government of the Sudan, pledged US$ 100,000 from the Sudan fund. Nevertheless, the African Union still depends upon contributions from Arab States financially capable of supporting the security and political efforts in Darfur. In this regard, it is worth noting that the resolution of the Algiers

Summit on Darfur affirmed the importance of the provision by Arab States of financial and logistic support to the African Union mission in Darfur.

168. The League of Arab States participated in all proceedings of the joint committee for the ceasefire in Darfur responsible for monitoring the N'djamena ceasefire accord signed between the Government of the Sudan and the two armed movements in Darfur. The committee held its ninth meeting on 13 and 14 November 2005 in the Chadian capital, in parallel with the Abuja negotiations and each had a positive impact upon the other. The outcome of this meeting was as follows:

- The committee condemned all parties for violation of the ceasefire agreement;
- The committee was asked to consult with the Sudanese parties to appoint members to ascertain the locations where the parties are concentrated in order to facilitate a plan for the separation of forces to be drawn up; the parties must provide the locations where their forces are concentrated to the committee;
- Affirmation of the need to disarm the Janjaweed;
- To call upon both rebel movements not to attack the African Union forces;
- The committee requested that joint patrols of all parties be conducted to protect refugees and civilians.

169. Within the framework of the Secretariat-General's monitoring of the current crisis between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Chad, I received the Chadian Minister of Transport on 1 January 2006 and affirmed the necessity of ending the tense situation between the two sisterly States and that the League of Arab States is working with the African Union to overcome this emergency. Within the framework of the League's monitoring of the containment of the situation between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Chad, the League welcomed the efforts of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi to convene an African mini-conference in Tripoli to end the crisis and a letter of thanks was sent to the Brother Leader for his efforts. The President of the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Chad, the President of Democratic Republic of the Congo and current Chairperson of the African Union, the President of Burkina-Faso, current Chairman of the Sahel-Sahara Group of countries, the President of the Central African Republic and members of the Presidential Council of the Sahel-Sahara Group took part in this mini-Summit, under the chairmanship of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi. The agreement stated the resolve of both countries to settle disputes by peaceful means in order to restore mutual confidence, an undertaking to normalize diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries, the commitment not to use their territory for acts of destruction directed against the sovereignty of the other party, to prevent the establishment of insurgent elements on the territory of either party and a commitment not to provide support to armed groups from either country. It provided for the formation of a Ministerial Committee under Libyan chairmanship with a membership of ministers of both parties, ministers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina-Faso, the Central African Republic and the Secretary-General of the Sahel-Sahara Group of countries, to monitor the agreement, seek peaceful solutions, work in collaboration with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, create a mission to collect

information on the ground, establish a peace and security force to ensure their common borders and put an end to media attacks by both countries.

170. In relation to the crisis in Eastern Sudan, the League of Arab States urges all parties, including the Free Lions, the Beja Congress and the Eastern Front, to reach a peaceful resolution of the crisis swiftly by cooperating with the Government of the Sudan to prevent the risk of a flare-up with dangerous implications not only for security, stability and the peace process in the Sudan but also for the adjacent countries on the Red Sea coast. On 2 February 2006, I received a letter from Mr. Suleiman Shahoumi, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the General People's Congress of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, inviting the Secretariat-General to participate as observer to the peace negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Eastern Front in Tripoli, Libya. However, these negotiations, scheduled to begin on 7 February 2006 were postponed; the Secretariat-General will participate should they resume.

171. It should be pointed out that the Secretariat-General participated actively in the team of mediators in all rounds of the political negotiations in Abuja between the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements in Darfur, under the auspices of the African Union, in the course of which the representative of the League of Arab States was chosen to coordinate cooperation among the representatives of the international community to the negotiations and to be the spokesman for the international parties. This was in recognition by the representatives of the international community to these negotiations of the importance of the Arab dimension and role in settling the Darfur crisis and of the League's diplomatic progress with all parties to the crisis since the negotiating rounds began. The Secretariat-General hopes that a comprehensive political solution will be reached in this round of negotiations. This hope is strengthened by the African union's appointment, at the start of the fifth round, of a high-level figure, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, to steer the negotiations. I have also noticed a readiness and evident desire on the part of the Government of the Sudan to reach a peaceful solution in this round. I previously met with the leaderships of the armed movements and advised them that there would be no solution to the crisis without serious negotiations and that only with a political solution will the suffering of the people of Darfur end and reconstruction and development of the region begin. It is now incumbent upon all States concerned with the crisis to apply pressure for a political solution to head the list of priorities in the current phase. After a political agreement is signed, the League of Arab States will, in collaboration with the Government of the Sudan and in coordination with the African Union, proceed to convene a coordinating conference on the reconstruction and development of the Darfur region to which the Government and principal actors in Darfur shall submit the development and investment projects they seek to implement and in which the Member States and Arab finance and investment funds will participate, in addition to specialized Arab organizations and councils. To strengthen Arab participation in these talks, the League has contributed US$ 50,000 in support of the current round of Sudanese peace negotiations in Abuja to bolster the efforts of the African Union in settling the crisis in the Darfur region.

172. The League of Arab States has continued its involvement with the current negotiations in Abuja between the Government of the Sudan and the insurgent movements within the three committees formed by the two sides. Modest progress has been achieved in the committees on wealth distribution and security

arrangements and efforts are continuing to narrow the gap between the positions of the parties on issues relating to other unresolved points on the agenda to be discussed by the committee on power sharing, such as participation by the movements in the institution of the Presidency, the future of Darfur and the representation of the people of Darfur in the executive and legislative authorities and in the administration. As the parties presented their submissions and arguments, the mediation team conducted wide-ranging consultations with the parties and other concerned bodies in open sessions and small working groups to scrutinize the proposals it will present as a basis for further talks aimed at reaching agreement on these points. The parties concluded deliberations to strengthen the N'djamena humanitarian ceasefire agreement and its mechanisms. At the same time, the parties discussed the powers of the ceasefire committee, the joint ceasefire committee and means of reinforcing these, as well as the difficulties faced by the African Union mission in the Sudan and the civil police in carrying out their duties in Darfur. They examined means of ensuring security inside the displaced persons camps, the military deployments of each of the parties, the issue of mine clearance and safe ways of strengthening the work of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies. Negotiations are underway on a draft comprehensive and permanent ceasefire agreement, designed to bolster the arrangements of the ceasefire accord and other security agreements. As regards the wealth-sharing agreement, the parties have reached agreement on most of the points on the agenda namely, the principles of wealth-sharing, harmonization of taxation, relations between the Governments, the criteria of power-sharing, economic policy, emergency programmes for the displaced, compensation, reconstruction, investment, development and the management of land and natural resources. Intensive consultations will continue on unresolved issues. The team of mediators believes that, if the parties continue to act in good faith, it will be possible to reach agreement in the near future.

173. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union held a meeting at ministerial level in Addis Ababa on 10 March 2006 to study the issue of turning over the African Union mission in the Sudan to the United Nations. The Council resolved to extend the mandate of the African Union mission in the Sudan until 30 September 2006 to contribute to improving the general security situation, create a secure environment for the continuation of humanitarian aid and return of displaced persons and refugees, help protect the civilian population in Darfur, monitor the adherence of the parties to the N'djamena humanitarian ceasefire agreement signed on 8 April 2004, the two Abuja protocols signed on 9 November 2004 and all future agreements, and assist in the process of confidence building. The Council requested that agreement be reached quickly during the current seventh round of Sudanese peace talks on the Darfur region.

The Sudan expressed its satisfaction at the resolution of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, considering it a positive step toward achieving peace in the Darfur region. The African Union and international community are faced with a real challenge and must put pressure on the two insurgent movements to bring about the success of the peace negotiations. The Government of the Sudan has succeeded in preventing infringement of its sovereignty and has restated its welcome of cooperation with the African Union and the United Nations after peace has been achieved in Darfur.

I welcomed the African Union resolution and affirmed that the League of Arab States will continue to work with it in full harmony and coordination to settle problems in the Horn of Africa, particularly the Darfur region. The League respects this resolution, in which it sees an approach focused upon a number of key issues, of which the principal ones are respect for the sovereignty of the Sudan, backing for the role of the African Union and the continuity of the African forces for a further six months. I affirmed the importance of driving forward the Abuja negotiations in order to arrive at a comprehensive agreement in the shortest possible time and that the League of Arab States and African Union are partners who will continue to work in close collaboration for a solution to the problem of Darfur. The League's efforts require that Member States fulfil their obligations to enable it to carry out it duties and responsibilities on the political and humanitarian fronts for a settlement of the current crisis.

e. Support for the Republic of Somalia

The outcome of the Somali reconciliation process in Kenya

174. The Somali crisis remains one of the most important items on the agenda of the League of Arab States. Arab Summit resolutions have affirmed the need to settle it quickly, coordinating Arab, international and regional efforts to prevent complications and negative repercussions on the Somali reconciliation process and to provide aid and assistance to the Somalis to achieve the desired reconciliation. It may be said that Arab activity to date vis-à-vis the Somali issue has reinforced the Arab presence in all forums dealing with the Somali crisis but has lacked sensitivity to neighbouring African States. The Arab dimension has become apparent through the participation of the Secretary-General's special envoy for Somalia with the African administration in all rounds of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Nairobi, in the meetings of the committee of the international community in Nairobi, which includes all international and regional organizations and States concerned with the Somali crisis, the participation as observer of the League of Arab States at the IGAD conference, and the Ministerial Council and its Ministerial Committee on Somalia, as well as through the ongoing Arab dialogue and collaboration with regional and international mechanisms and Arab contacts with the countries adjacent to Somalia.

175. I directed my special envoy for Somalia to participate in the reconciliation conference from its inception on 15 October 2005 and he made estimable efforts, in association with representatives of the international community. The conference resulted in formation of the parliament, election of the President of the Republic and formation of the government.

176. Summit resolution 304 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) welcomed the positive developments on the Somali scene, as represented by formation of the Somali parliament, election of the country's President and formation of a Council of Ministers agreed and welcomed by the parliament. It resolved to bolster these positive developments by providing financial support of US$ 26,000,000 to enable the Somali Government to relocate inside the country, start working and implement its emergency programmes. Within the framework of the efforts of the international community's representatives and with the participation of the Secretary-General's special envoy for Somalia, agreement was reached between the Government of Kenya and the Somali President to relocate the Somali Government to Somalia in accordance with the agreed plan. This began to take place on 14 June 2005 with the arrival of the Prime Minister at the town of Jowhar, 90 km. from Mogadishu, which will be the temporary seat of government until the militias in Mogadishu are

disarmed. Some ministers and parliamentarians have established themselves in Mogadishu in preparation for the transfer there of the government.

177. A dispute arose between the Speaker of the parliament, some members of parliament and a number of ministers on the one had, and the Somali President and Prime Minister on the other. The dispute worsened over the issue of deploying forces from neighbouring countries to support the peace process and the argument over the seat of government and parliament. The opposition is of the view that the Constitution has established Mogadishu as the capital of Somalia, not the town of Jowhar, which is the seat of government. Somali legitimacy, represented by the President, parliament and ministers believe there to be no real political dispute since no one has spoken of Jowhar as the capital of the country but only as the temporary seat of government until the capital, Mogadishu is made ready to be the permanent seat of government and parliament.

178. According to some, the dispute inside the government and parliament is attributable to the desire of several militia leaders, the so-called warlords, to preserve their own interests, which most of them do not want to sacrifice in favour of building the Somali State.

179. I followed closely the peace agreement concluded at Aden on 5 January 2006 between President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and the Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Sheikh Hassan Adan, under the auspices of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen. The hope is that the agreement will end the disputes inside the new Somali institutions and open up horizons for reconstruction. In implementation of the Arab Summit resolutions (Algiers, 2005) on Somalia stipulating the provision of US$ 26,000,000 for the Republic of Somalia and to bolster implementation of this agreement, I transferred the sum of US$ 1,000,000 – after liaising with President Ali Abdullah Saleh upon conclusion the Aden meetings – to the account of the Government of Somalia to enable implementation of its programmes.

180. In implementation of the aforementioned agreement, the Somali parliament convened in the city of Baidoa on 26 February 2006, with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme and with the presence of the Somali President and Prime Minister and representatives of the international community, including my envoy to Somalia, Ambassador Salem al-Khusaiby and his deputy, Abdullah al-Arimi. The parliamentary sitting discussed issues concerning disarmament of the militias, the establishment of a unified army and the date for transfer of the seat of government and parliament from Jowhar to the capital, Mogadishu. The conference discussed means of extending humanitarian assistance to areas affected by the drought that has ravaged the Horn of Africa recently.

181. I sent a number of letters to the Foreign Ministers of Member States requesting payment of their shares of the support allocated by the Algiers Summit to Somalia. The Secretariat-General has only received the following financial contributions for Somalia from Member States:

- US$ 2,101,000 from the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, representing its share in full;
- US$ 50,000 from the Republic of Sudan, representing part of its share;

- I received from the permanent representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia memorandum 324/1/19/248 of 22 February 2006 on implementation of the resolution of the Algiers Summit in support of the Republic of Somalia, advising that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had agreed to pay the Kingdom's share of the financial support to Somalia in six instalments, the first of which is currently US$ 606,666. The second instalment will only be paid after confirmation that other Arab States have paid their shares or part thereof. The Secretariat-General circulated this memorandum to Member States.
- In this regard, I would like to point out that the financial commitment adopted at the Beirut Summit (2002) on support for Somalia, affirmed at the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit and amounting to US$ 56,000,000 to be paid in accordance with Member States' percentage contributions to the budget of the Secretariat-General, has only been implemented by the United Arab Emirates, which paid its contribution of US$ 3,676,768 in full on 2 September 2002 and the State of Qatar, which paid US$ 1,120,000 on 2 March 2003. These amounts were remitted to the Somali Government at the time.

Internal challenges facing the new Somali legitimacy

182. Implementation of the reconciliation process in Mogadishu and surrounding area and readying the city politically as the capital of the Republic of Somalia is a key issue. It requires a dialogue to be held with the leaderships of the opposition groups in the city on the basis of the principle of power-sharing and guaranteed participation in creating the capital's administrative apparatus, including the police force and army. A similar situation applies in Baidoa and Kismayo.

183. The decommissioning of the militias' weapons, training and rehabilitation of the militias into the structure of the police force and army, disbandment of the militias of the Islamic Courts and incorporating them into the police force will, to the extent that it encourages other militias to join the police force and army will also reassure neighbouring countries, the United States and the European Union of the true direction of the new legitimacy.

184. The establishment of ground rules and mechanisms to enable the capital to belong to all clans and tribes, not just to the Hawiya tribe shall only come about by first proceeding to return looted property.

185. It is worth emphasizing that the general tribal aspect, without looking down upon it, continues to enjoy considerable importance. It deserves credit for achieving Somali reconciliation in Kenya and will be the starting point for the restoration of unity and stability. It will, likewise, be a pillar of any government that has the idea of making everyone feel allegiance to the nation by means of the fair distribution of power. Accordingly, considerable attention must be paid to the impartial and fair representation of all the clans throughout the state apparatus currently being constructed.

186. The challenge of the incorporation of Somaliland

The federal system in the interim charter proposes the accommodation of Somaliland, which did not take part in the reconciliation conference, offering it an open door so that it might consider renouncing the unilateral decision to secede from the mother country and preserve the unity of Somalia, by initiating dialogue between it and the government that emerged from the conference.

The agreement with the armed opposition in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa and the formation of the effective political authority of the new legitimacy in southern Somalia will facilitate the process of dialogue with Somaliland, which has frequently announced its readiness to enter into dialogue with the southern authority on the basis of justice and equality, on condition that both parties to the dialogue possess an open mind vis-à-vis the future united Somali State. Any substantive revival of this unity will involve the renegotiation of all the symbols, institutions and structures of the state, including the capital. The League of Arab States has maintained close ties with Somaliland without recognising its secession and is anxious to enhance its security and stability, as well as the limited social, health and education services provided by "the Government of Somaliland". The League is particularly anxious to provide support for this region in the area of health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

187. Regional challenges:

- The concern of Somalia's neighbours, particularly Ethiopia and Kenya, with the Somali crisis is attributable to a number of factors, consisting basically in containing the spread of the crisis to several of their regions where conditions exist that are comparable to those in Somalia. In addition, there are a number of considerations relating to control over certain regions of Somalia where Somali authority is absent, as well as reactions to the possibility of a developing Arab and Islamic role in solving the crises in the Horn of Africa. The fact of the matter is that, without arriving at a balanced understanding and resolutions to which all are committed, whether through the mechanisms of IGAD, the African Union or the League of Arab States, it will be difficult to provide genuine regional support to the new legitimacy in Somalia and the fate of the Government of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed will the same as that of Abdulqasim Salaad Hassan.

- In spite of the above, ignoring the anxieties of the non-Arab States in the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia and Kenya – in the context of a solution to the Somali crisis is unrealistic, as it will soon clash with Ethiopian and Kenyan attempts to further their interests. Therefore, taking these anxieties into account, following a policy of good neighbourliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of all and creating common interests within the framework of achieving regional stability as a shared goal, will shape the nature of relations in the Horn of Africa on new bases that were often lacking during the cold war. Perhaps there are those who believe that the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has had an impact on the desired outcome from the Somali reconciliation process. However, the repercussions of this conflict are continuing and it is in Somalia's interests not to become involved by remaining impartial, while working when it can to reduce tension in the region.

- It is essential to create close relations based upon shared interests between the Arab region and African States in the Horn of Africa. The visits of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed to the States of the Horn of African and the Arab region reflect balance in this respect.

- I have been anxious to forge good relations with Somalia's neighbours and made an official visit to Addis Ababa on 24 June 2002, which contributed to remove the tension that had soured Arab relations with Ethiopia because of the stance on developments in the situation in Somalia at that time. A joint declaration was issued affirming the important role of the League of Arab States in addressing the Somali crisis, agreement was reached on setting up an Arab-Ethiopian chamber of commerce and an Arab-Ethiopian cultural week was inaugurated on an annual basis. I received at League headquarters His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki who proposed a special relationship between the Eritrea and the League of Arab States.

188. **Challenges on the international front**

- The representatives of the international community in Nairobi played an important role in providing support and assistance to bring about a successful outcome to the reconciliation conference. However, the international community has not to date provided tangible financial and material support and has not played the expected role in settling several Somali disputes. It has been tardy in providing international programmes through the Security Council to enable disarmament of the Somali militias and incorporation of their personnel into the institutions of society and state that are currently being created and which the international community must help to consolidate. Without disarmament of the militias, the government will be unable to establish its legitimacy, impose order and implement the law. This lax international stance may be due to the unenthusiastic position of the United States of America because if its fear of further involvement in the shifting sands of Somalia.

- Somalia is enduring a terrible humanitarian crisis, aggravated by the worst drought for a decade. Because of the failure of the rains in the winter of 2005, some 1,700,000 people, in addition to 400,000 locally displaced persons, are now in urgent of need of assistance for the coming six months. This number has doubled since the last seasonal estimate in August 2005 and now stands at close to 1,000,000 people in pressing need of aid and protection. Approximately 710,000 people suffer from severe nutritional deficiency and a crisis of support, while some 915,000 are facing a humanitarian emergency. The regions worst affected by drought are Gedo, Middle and Lower Jubba and areas of Bay and Bakool. The areas of north Gedo and between the two rivers in Juba region have been classified as disaster areas and are threatened by famine.

- The present, complex emergency situation in Somalia needs to confront the problems of water, food and health security and the provision of protection. If we take into account that the next rains are not expected before April, the effects of the drought will worsen and improvement will, to a large extent, depend upon the arrival of supplies at the appropriate time and foreign aid.

- At the time of preparing this report, the response of the international community has remained meagre. The matter requires coordinated international Arab efforts to counter the disastrous effects of the current drought in Somalia.

189. **Support for the Republic of Somalia**

On the basis of Arab ministerial meetings and, likewise, Arab Summit meetings, it may be said that the programmes of the League of Arab States in support of Somali legitimacy involve the following:

At the level of Member States:

- The League of Arab States welcomed and recognized the Somali Government when it was announced at the reconciliation conference and declared its readiness to help it impose order, implement the law and reconstruct the county. It also declared its readiness to send ambassadors to the Somali capital when the government transfers there.
- It is important that Member States receive delegations from the Somali parliament and government at the League of Arab States to explain programmes and receive advice and assistance.
- Arab parliaments and consultative councils have invited a number of Somali parliamentarians to attend a parliamentary session as a form of training; this also helps to cement Arab-Somali ties.
- Member States and Arab finance and investment funds will participate in the Arab coordination conference to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Somalia and announce limited pledges to implement some of the development and investment projects the Somali Government will present at the meeting.

At Secretariat-General level:

- The opening of an Arab League liaison office in Somalia to coordinate Arab reconstruction and development aid and participate in strengthening the Somali reconciliation process;
- The Secretariat-General's call for a coordination meeting for the reconstruction and development of Somalia in which Member States and Arab finance and investment funds will participate and the Somali Government will present projects for which it seeks finance or investment; the meeting shall be coordinated in collaboration with the Somali Government and Arab and Islamic finance institutions;
- The preparation by specialized Arab organizations and ministerial councils of models and concrete development and technical programmes for submission to their legislative committees for resolutions to be adopted, thereby contributing to the reconstruction and development of Somalia, particularly in the areas of health, the environment, development programmes, electricity, communications, etc;
- The playing of an essential role by ALECSO in coordinating Arab aid to rehabilitate Somalia's Arabic language education sector;

- The necessity of Member States taking part in overcoming the present humanitarian crisis in Somalia due to the spreading drought in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, which is threatened by famine.

190. **An urgent programme to be implemented by the Secretariat-General from the Somalia support account in implementation of the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit and ministerial levels**:

- Coordination with the African Union to prepare and implement a joint project between the League of Arab States, African Union and other international and regional organizations (United Nations, European Union, IGAD) to disarm the Somali militias and incorporate their members into the institutions of Somali society, in collaboration with the Somali Government, with funding anticipated from the international community; the Secretariat-General has allocated US$ 1,000,000 to commence implementation of this project;

- Agreement has been reached with the Somali Government and United Nations Development Programme to lift the embargo on the import of Somali livestock, within the partnership framework to which the League of Arab States contributed US$ 1,000,000 in four instalments. The Arab Organization for Economic Development (AOED) and the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) will participate in implementation of this project, of which the aims are:
  - To create and support a Somali livestock authority to license livestock and product quality;
  - To help market meat and livestock;
  - To enhance capacity to diagnose disease in livestock;
  - To identify and train veterinary authorities and certify veterinary surgeons and licensing supervisors;
  - To promote the export of Somali livestock with commercial partners;
  - To prepare and train officials of the Somali livestock authority to improve the quality of animals for export;
  - To provide technical support to improve the condition of slaughterhouses and the health inspection of meat; to provide laboratory training in health measures relating to the transportation of livestock;
  - To renovate a selected number of laboratories in Somalia and supply them with the necessary equipment.

The implementation of this programme represents the greatest benefit that can be provided to the Somali people, who rely for their livelihood on the export of livestock.

- In this context and in implementation of the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit and ministerial levels, a partnership agreement was signed on 2 March 2006 between the League and the United Nations Development Programme for the financing of a programme to develop livestock resources in Somalia.

- An agreement was also signed on 2 March 2006 between the Secretariat-General and the World Health Organization to rehabilitate five hospitals in different regions of Somalia and provide these with medical equipment and apparatus at an estimated cost of US$ 500,000.
- The Secretariat-General continues to request Member States to provide urgent humanitarian assistance for Somali victims, either directly or through the support fund for Somalia. The Secretariat-General is fully prepared to participate in averting the risk of famine in Somalia by:
  - Providing direct humanitarian aid to affected areas in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme;
  - Coordinating the efforts of Member States and Arab civil society organizations in response to the present suffering in Somalia.

f. Support for the Union of Comoros

191. The Union of the Comoros successfully overcame the constitutional crisis and problem of the secession of Anjouan Island from the unitary state by the signing of the Fomboni Agreement for Comorian reconciliation on 17 February 2001, the adoption of a new draft Constitution for the country on 23 December 2001 and the appointment of His Excellency Othman Ghazali as President. The process of adjusting to the new institutional situation has passed through many difficulties since then. The joint efforts of the League of Arab States, the African Union, the International Organization of La Francophonie, the European Union and countries of the region, particularly South Africa, played a significant role in preventing the progress achieved from failing. These efforts resulted in agreement, on 20 December 2003, on the transitional arrangements in the Union of the Comoros, relating to power-sharing, administration of customs and the budget, security measures and the holding of legislative elections, with support from the international community. A committee to monitor implementation of the agreement on transitional measures was set up, consisting of representatives of the Comorian parties signatory to the agreement, neighbouring States and international and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, in the endeavour to ensure that the signatory parties respected their commitments and also to ensure implementation of the agreement; the League of Arab States participated actively in meetings of the monitoring committee. A credit fund was established for a period of one year to bolster the reconciliation process in the Comoros, supervised by the United Nations Development Programme; the financial requirements to cover the process were estimated at EUR€ 7,800,000, to which the League of Arab States contributed US$ 500,000.

192. At the Amman Summit (2001) the Arab leaders resolved to set up a fund of US$ 10,000,000 within the framework of the Secretariat-General in support of the Union of the Comoros to which Member States would contribute to implement development projects. The state of Qatar contributed US$ 2,000,000 and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Sultanate of Oman each contributed US$ 1,000,000 to the fund. The Arab Republic of Egypt contributed US$ 500,000 to assist the Comorian electricity grid. In this context, the Secretariat-General is continuing to implement the following:

- A project, valued at US$ 5,000,000 and currently in its final stage, to support and improve the performance of the electrical power stations on the three islands of the Union of the Comoros; within the framework of the same project, 18 technicians and professionals from the Comorian Ministry of Electricity are currently being trained. The Secretariat-General agreed to a request from the President of the Union of the Comoros to assist in financing a training project for the installation of 20,000 electricity meters, valued at US$ 1,000,000, from the Comorian support fund.
- Holding training courses for Comorian students residing in Cairo in various uses of the computer (secretarial work, accounting, journalism, web design) to raise capabilities and enable them to return to the Comoros and contribute to its development;
- The Secretariat-General is preparing a training course in the Comorian capital on E-diplomacy, in collaboration with the Institute of Electronics, designed to raise the competency of staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of the Comoros.
- A contribution of US$ 300,000 to both the health sector and vocational training sector;
- Support for the establishment of a Comorian national university, a project in collaboration with the Secretariat-General, the Arab Fund for Technical Assistance to African Countries (AFTAAC), ALECSO, the Federation of Arab Universities and Arab development funds;
- The Secretariat-General is study ways of financing the establishment of a terrestrial television broadcasting station in the Union of the Comoros, pursuant to the visit of the three-member delegation (the Department of Information of the Secretariat-General, the Arab States Broadcasting Union and the Arab Satellite Communications Organization, "Arabsat") to the Comoros from 18 to 22 September 2004 and the specialized technical report on the state of facilities and needs in terms of equipment, operational power and human resources, estimated at US$ 3,600,000.
- In the area of social and cultural development the Secretariat-General, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) prepared a study for a model project for the development of Quranic schools on the three islands. An explanatory memorandum was submitted to ALECSO in the Republic of Tunisia for evaluation and study.
- In collaboration with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and AAAID, to strive to assist the Government of the Union of the Comoros to develop fisheries and increase local production.

193. At its 36th meeting held in Damascus from 15 to 28 July 2005, the Higher Coordinating Committee for Joint Arab Action adopted the following recommendations in support of the Union of the Comoros:

- To request Arab finance and investment funds to participate actively in the donors conference on the Union of the Comoros to be held in Mauritius during the second half of his year, with a view to expediting mobilization of the necessary financial resources for the economic and social revitalization of the Union of the Comoros, and to call upon these funds to direct their investments to aspects of economic development in the Union of the Comoros;

- To request Arab finance and investment funds to study the possibility of contributing to the establishment of a Comorian national university;
- To request AOAD and AAAID to express an opinion on the project presented by the Comorian Government to develop fisheries and increase local production;
- To request ALECSO to provide such support as is possible to maintain the development of the Arabic language in the Comoros.

194. Bilateral Arab contributions to support the Union of the Comoros of which the Secretariat-General has been informed are as follows:

- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has advised that it has provided assistance and development loans to the Union of the Comoros as follows:
  - A grant of up to US$ 2,000,000 within the framework of direct assistance from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Union of the Comoros; the grant has been allocated to pay its contributions to several joint Arab financial institutions, including the Arab Fund for Economic Development, the Arab Monetary Fund and certain joint Arab ventures (including its share in the Arab Fisheries Company) and to pay part of the salary arrears to officials in Anjouan Island; the sum of US$ 50,000 has been allocated to support the Red Crescent Society in the Comoros
  - Total aid and development loans from the Kingdom to the Comoros come to Saudi riyals 191,800,000, of which SR 147,800,000 are non-returnable and the remaining SR 44,000,000 are soft development loans
  - The Saudi Fund for Development is studying a number of projects for the Comoros, for a contribution of SR 37,500,000.
- The Republic of Tunisia has provided ten study grants for Comorian students at Tunisian universities during academic year 2004-2005, as a contribution to the Comorian support fund.
- The Government of Syria has provided four study grants for Comorian students accepted at the Military Academy of the Syrian Arab Republic, as a contribution to the Comorian support fund.
- On 21 November 2005, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya advised that, on 8 October 2005, it provided US$ 300,000 to the Union of the Comoros to support establishment of a library at the national university, within the framework of implementation of the Algiers Summit resolution on support for the Union of the Comoros.
- On 12 August 2004, in Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan and the Union of the Comoros signed a general framework agreement on cooperation, within the framework of which the Republic of the Sudan will provide the Union of the Comoros with technical assistance, expertise and training in agriculture, fisheries, education, vocational training, health and maritime and

air transport. Within the framework of the agreement, the Sudan will respond to Comorian needs for:

- University lecturers and schoolteachers
- Experts and training in agriculture and livestock
- Training of Comorian medical staff in the Sudan and provision of technical medical assistance by secondment of a group of qualified medical personnel to work in the Comoros.

195. A delegation from the Secretariat-General took part in the Donors' Conference for the Union of the Comoros on 8 December 2005 in the Republic of Mauritius, chaired jointly by the Prime Ministers of the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of South Africa, under the auspices of the African Union and attended by the President of the Union of the Comoros. The aim of the conference was to speed up mobilization of the financial resources necessary for economic and social revival in the Comoros. The poverty reduction and economic growth strategy for the period 2006-2009 was estimated at a total cost of US$ 400,000,000. Representatives of 22 states and 57 international and regional organizations took part in the conference, as well as observers from 49 states and organizations. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of the Sudan, the State of Qatar, the Sultanate of Oman, the Saudi Fund for Development, the Kuwait Fund for Development, the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa (EFTCA) and AOAD participated in the conference. A total of US$ 200,000,000 was pledged by donors for development in the Comoros during the conference, US$ 140,000,000 in cash and US$ 60,000,000 in technical assistance. The League of Arab States pledged to contribute US$ 1,000,000 and the State of Qatar US$ 1,500,000. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of the Sudan, the Saudi Fund for Development and EFTCA pledged to provide technical assistance and programmes. EFTCA indicated that it would provide development programmes to the Union of the Comoros immediately with a value of US$ 2,000,000.

196. On 21 January 2006, I received His Excellency Othman Ghazali, President of the Union of the Comoros at the headquarters of the League of Arab States. His Excellency met with the permanent delegates to the League, expressed his thanks and appreciation for the efforts to develop Joint Arab Action and praised the political, economic and social support given to his country. He requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts and contacts with Arab States in support of the Comoros and indicated his country's expectation of receiving Saudi oil at reduced prices to mitigate the effects of the oil crisis. He stated that Libya had agreed to provide a grant of US$ 2,000,000 to his country via the League of Arab States. His Excellency also mentioned that his country had decided to freeze the issue of Mayotte, which remains under French occupation, at international and regional assemblies after France acknowledged the Comorian identity of the island. Letters were sent to the Foreign Ministers informing them of what had been discussed at this meeting and the working session with the Secretary-General that dealt with developments in the Comoros and other relevant issues.

197. There is no doubt that, for the League of Arab States to continue playing an active role in support of the Comoros, implementation of Ministerial Council resolution 6331 on the opening of an office of the League in the Comorian capital will be required. Such an office, alongside those of the African Union, the United

Nations and the International Organization of La Francophonie, will contribute to stability in the Comoros and oversee the provision and implementation of Arab development aid. The League must also continue its role in this sisterly country of providing assistance for the reorganization of the new Comorian systems and institutions in the light of the positive developments that have occurred in the country, through the commitment of Member States to fulfilling their obligations and giving concrete form to their solidarity with the Comorian people by payment of their contributions to the Comorian support fund resolved at the Amman Summit (2001).

g. Addressing the losses and measures resulting from the dispute over the Lockerbie issue

198. Libyan relations with the European States and the United States witnessed positive developments through diligent efforts to overcome the disputes of the past and build normal relations in the future that respect the interests of both parties, contribute to solving the current problems from which the Arab region suffers and enable the foundations to be laid for building healthy relations on the basis of mutual respect. This comes after closure of the file on the so-called Lockerbie crisis and adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1506 (12 September 2003) requiring the lifting of all sanctions measures imposed on Libya, which has fulfilled all its obligations as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

199. Within the framework of these efforts, Libya also took an initiative to renounce activities related to weapons of mass destruction.

200. The League of Arab States welcomed the Libyan measures that crowned intense diplomatic efforts supported by Arab, African and Non-Aligned Movement States.

201. The League of Arab States is following closely current efforts to develop relations between Libya and the European nations and United States and exploring a suitable formulation to enable Libya to obtain the necessary compensation for the human and material losses incurred as a result of sanctions and to demand the release of the Libyan national held hostage, Abdelbaset al-Megrahi.

h. Ideas of the Leader of the Libyan Revolution, Muammar al-Qadhafi, presented at the Arab Summit in Amman, 2001

202. During a closed session of the Amman Summit (March, 2001), Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi delivered a speech containing a number of important ideas on the general Arab situation.

203. These ideas included six pivotal issues:

1. Summit working methods;
2. Globalization and the features of the modern age;
3. Reasons for the establishment of an Arab space;
4. The affiliation of the Arabs with the African space;
5. Settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict;
6. Interaction with the United States of America.

204. The conference adopted resolution 204 (28 March 2001) requiring the formation of a committee of seven states: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Palestine, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Arab Republic of Egypt, as well as the Secretary-General. The Republic of the Sudan was later added to the membership on the basis of a Libyan proposal and with the agreement of Member States.

205. The committee initially convened six meetings:

- Tripoli (11 December 2001), at ministerial level
- Cairo (22 July 2001), at delegate level
- Cairo (8 September 2001), at ministerial level
- Cairo (8 March 2002), at ministerial level
- Cairo (5 September 2002), at ministerial level
- Khartoum (13 to 14 January, 2003), at ministerial level.

206. The meetings held prior to the Beirut Summit (March 2002) agreed to discuss the ideas of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi during the Summit, in the event of his attendance, and the Secretariat-General drafted a comprehensive report on the workings of the committee but which was not presented to the Summit at the request of the Libyan delegation. The Beirut Summit adopted resolution 223 (28 March 2002) mandating the concerned Ministerial Committee to continue studying the ideas of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi and to complete its work quickly for the purpose of presenting its conclusions to an extraordinary Summit to be held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo or any Arab State.

207. In view of the imminent signs of war in the region and decision of the United States and United Kingdom to attack Iraq, the conference was moved from Bahrain to Sharm El-Sheikh, where it was held on 1 March 2003. The conference agenda was limited to developments concerning Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Secretary-General's report on Joint Arab Action, support for Somalia and the Joint Arab Action system.

208. The subject of the ideas of the Leader of the Libyan revolution were represented to the Summit at the 17th ordinary session (Algiers, March 2005), which adopted a resolution requiring the Ministerial Committee charged with studying the Brother Leader's ideas presented to the Amman Summit (2001) to resume activity. The committee held a meeting at delegate level on 25 June 2005 in which it reviewed the measures agreed at the Algiers Summit (2005), particularly in relation to the drafting of two studies by the Secretary-General and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on the substance of these ideas, as core working papers for the committee at ministerial level. I submitted a paper to the aforementioned meeting of the committee at delegate level as a preliminary to its study by the committee at ministerial level and forwarded it to the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs for submission to the Brother Leader.

209. Agreement was reached on a number of points for submission to the committee at ministerial level; the most important of these were:

- To welcome the announcement by the Libyan representative that the Libyan paper would be ready shortly and included with the Secretary-General's paper for submission to the committee at ministerial level;
- To affirm the need to update the ideas proposed at the Amman Summit (2001) and incorporate developments from the period from March 2001 to March 2005 namely, international terrorism, democracy and reform of the United Nations, as mentioned by the Brother Leader in his address to the Algiers Summit (2005);
- That the Libyan paper should include clear and specific mechanisms for establishing a practical framework for implementing the committee's task and practical, procedural measures for making use of these ideas;
- To take practical steps to make available the necessary financial resources to cover the costs of the studies to be conducted by research centres and expert firms, as well as the necessary costs of convening the extraordinary conference provided for in the Algiers resolution;
- To determine the date and venue of the next committee meeting at ministerial level.

210. The paper I submitted to the aforementioned delegate meeting contained the following elements:

- The study aims to analyze the ideas proposed by the Leader of the September Revolution in Amman, provide them with a solid foundation and examine ways of applying them in the current circumstances.
- The ideas revolve around two basic axes, the global and the regional. The global axis is founded upon the phenomenon of large global blocs and their impact on international relations, while the regional axis is founded upon the phenomenon of the growth of Israeli power and its effect upon Arab relations.
- Reviewing the interconnections between these axes, the Brother Leader reached two conclusions. The first is that, faced with the phenomenon of large global blocs, the Arabs have no option but to join the African Union. The second is that, faced with the phenomenon of the growth of Israeli power, the Arabs must inevitably recognize Israel, in exchange for the return of the Palestinian refugees to their land and establishment of a balance of power between Israel and the Arabs.
- In elaborating the first axis, the Brother Leader stated that he had become accustomed during the last thirty years to Arab conferences and resolutions that achieved nothing and explained that he has striven instead for African unity where gigantic steps have indeed been achieved in a short time. He hoped that the Arabs would join the African Union and that it will become an Afro-Arab Union, on the grounds that two-thirds of Arabs are in Africa and the one-third outside Africa should, without hesitation, join the African Union to create the Afro-Arab space or Afro-Arab Union. He affirmed that that is where a secure Arab future lies, as Africa has enormous potential, most Africans are Muslims and it was the Arabs who founded there kingdoms and empires.

- The call for the Arabs to join the African Union (described by him as the only option currently available to the Arabs) reflects a major trend in contemporary Arab thought. During its confrontational phase, Arab nationalist thought gradually came to view the African continent as the strategic depth of the Arab nation. This idea derives not only from the existence of Arab States across North African (and in the Horn of Africa) but also from maritime, human and cultural contacts between the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. Given the Arab nation's limited resources, it needs African economic depth and given that the Arab nation is bordered by great powers to the north, it is in constant need of African strategic depth. From this perspective, the Arab struggle for independence and progress and the national liberation movements in Africa were two sides of the same coin.

- The substance of the address of the Leader of the September Revolution on the future of relations between the Arabs and the African Union connects with the Libyan experience itself. Throughout Libyan history, the vitality of the land routes connecting Tripoli in the north to Kufra and elsewhere in the south has been well known. This negates the colonialist thesis which holds that the Sahara desert separates "black" Africa from North Africa. Everyone knows that these routes acquired particular importance after the discovery of oil in the Sahara in the earlier part of the last century.

- Nevertheless, some will ask if this vision of the Arabs "joining" the African Union can be applied in practice. Perhaps there is some ambiguity in the matter that may be removed in we take into account what the Brother Leader stated in the same address regarding the establishment of an Afro-Arab Union. The proposal for discussion is, perhaps, the creation of a "composite" union based upon two independent unions, one African and the other, Arab. This requires one of two things: either that the League of Arab States is transformed into a regional "union" instead of a regional "organization", along the lines of what happened to the Organization of African Unity when it became the African Union, after which it would conclude an agreement with the African Union to create the aforementioned composite union, or that the League of Arab States in its present form as a "treaty union", as seen by some, concludes a (union) agreement with the African Union. In both cases, there will be a difference, within the framework of the aforementioned composite union, in terms of the rights and duties of the ten Arab States that are members of both the League of Arab States and the African Union and the twelve Arab States that are not members of the African Union, although this difference may gradually be reduced as each stage of the agreement between the two unions is applied.

- It is certain that this endeavour will face considerable difficulties. Nevertheless, if the proposition is accepted, it is necessary to strive to overcome such difficulties without shrinking from the effort to achieve the desired objective otherwise Israel, a non-African country, would have abandoned the infiltration of Africa on the grounds that it is situated in Asia. Additionally, there is a tangible level of competition between the great powers regarding control over the African continent, which the Arabs can exploit by keeping their attention fixed on the goal, monitoring it carefully and grasping the reality of its dimensions. I believe that there must be cooperation with Africa to help achieve this goal. In other words, the matter cannot be limited just to Arab necessity, since there must also be African acceptance and this itself is uncertain in view of the increasingly repeated view that Africa is exclusively black and that the inclusion of the Asian, Arab nations would be in radical opposition to the goals and logic of the African nations.

- We come now to the second axis in the address of Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi to the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Amman, 27 to 28 March 2001) namely, the phenomenon of the growth of Israeli power and its effect upon the Palestinian issue and Arab relations. We notice first of all that, while Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi proposed only one option for the Arabs in his discourse on the first axis namely, "unity" with the African Union, he proposed a number of options in his discourse on the second axis namely, Israel and the Palestinian issue.

- Perhaps the most controversial proposition is the reference to the possibility of accepting Israel as a member in the League of Arab States. Did the Brother Leader wish to shake the world and push Israel's most fanatical supporters to the point of no return? The important thing is that this proposal comes with exactly the same conditions the Arabs have put on all their resolutions on the Palestinian issue, neither more nor less.

- The Leader of the Revolution mentioned one option: "We can stand up against America as China did when it made it choose between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China that is, either relations with the People's Republic or relations with Taiwan. The whole world opted for the People's Republic with its population of a billion and rejected Taiwan. We, the Arabs, should say to America, 'Either the Arabs or Israel' and it would have to choose. If the interests of the American people lie with Israel, let them choose Israel but if the interests of the American people lie with the Arabs, America must change course and alter its policy completely."

- This point must be explored thoroughly as it expresses the need to reach a strategic position vis-à-vis the United States. We must not be drawn into processes or negotiations that are not supported by a strategic Arab vision. The exploration must focus on the overall future regional situation and its relation to the international situation and its major players, particularly the United States.

- On the other hand, the proposal raises the question of whether or not it is within the power of the Arabs to resort to this option. In principle, the answer does not seem to be affirmative. If we take into account that this proposal was made six months prior to the events of 11 September 2001 and observe that one of the principle outcomes of these events was a diminished American sympathy for Arab regimes, including those friendly to America, it is legitimate to wonder what damage might result from a serious argument with the United States. It would be an irrevocable step and must be supported by the Arab masses (that is, Arab public opinion).

- The Leader of the September Revolution insisted in his aforementioned speech that Arab recognition for Israel be collective and overt, rather than individual or covert. When considering this proposal, however, it appears that the Arab world, with a few exceptions, has moved beyond the stage of de facto recognition of Israel, albeit a hesitant, embarrassed recognition, even when overt. Nothing prevents the Arabs from sitting together and discussing the scale of their relations with Israel, how far these relations will go, where the acceptable and unacceptable limits to these relations are and under what conditions they might be concluded, taking into consideration the elements of the Arab peace initiative adopted in Beirut.

- In the same context, Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi warned the Arabs of "a sudden Israeli military explosion" and asked, "Are you [the Arab leaders] ready to confront Israeli military expansion? If you are then ready yourselves and let us know." Although this view seems pessimistic, any comparison of Arab and Israeli military power will confirm its accuracy. The most important consequence of the proposition is his statement that peace in the Middle East will not endure without nuclear deterrence and that we Arabs must achieve parity with Israeli nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The logic of this proposal reflects the proverb, "Only iron blunts iron". However, it is acknowledged that the policy of the great powers, and behind them the United Nations itself, has made the manufacture of such weapons a pretext for foreign intervention, military occupation, subversion of national independence and an end to what remains of the trappings of regional sovereignty (except in the case of Israel). The four years since Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi's speech have shown this to be true but should not divert us from dealing with the crucial question he raised namely, how are Arabs to deal with the nuclear issue in the Middle East?

- Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi elucidated one concept of co-existence with Israel after its recognition by the League of Arab States, when he stated that we shall decide to dissolve it in economic and human terms and in all respects, particularly as a state. In the age of globalization, Israel will be unable to live as it decides, as a state based on ethnicity, religion or language. It is impossible because that Arabs are an ocean, not just a sea. Perhaps this discourse poses the truth of the Israeli right's fear of peace. Some of us still remember a book published in Israel after the start of the so-called the peace process entitled, significantly, *Israel and the danger of peace*. Their fear is of just this "dissolving", which is why they insist upon preserving the Jewishness of the state i.e., its separate identity, distinct from other countries of the region and, indeed, the world.

- It is necessary to link Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi's proposed options for the Arab-Israeli conflict with the question of the right of return of the refugees, the need for Israel to relinquish its nuclear weapons and the subject of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and to link all these with the "no option" but to join the African space, on the other. The global axis and the part it plays in regional formations is a condition for any degree of freedom of movement in the regional axis. It is what might be considered as an implicit ordering of priorities for action, in keeping with current circumstances and prevailing conditions.

211. This review has lead me to conclude that the vision put forward by Brother Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi at the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Amman on 27 and 28 March 2001, if appearing to be spontaneous and simplistic in its treatment, nevertheless raises important geopolitical points,

proposes a variety of concepts and touches strategic elements of palpable historic depth. Perhaps the course of international and regional events subsequent to the Amman speech will spur us to engage with this vision and examine it on the basis of reaching an understanding of the regional future of the Arab world, its regional and international relations, the stance on the proposition pertaining to peace in the Middle East, the true state of the region's security and the extent of its conjunction with the Mediterranean and African spaces.

Chapter 2: The development of the Joint Arab Action system

I. The Summit mandate for reform and development

212. At the Amman Summit (2001), the Kings, Presidents and Emirs of the Arab States expressed their profound desire to develop the structure, systems and mechanisms of Joint Arab Action to keep pace with new developments in the regional and international arenas. The resolution defined the aim and mission and reflected confidence in the mandate given to the Secretary-General, which specifically stipulated the following:

- "To take the necessary measures to define the development of the systems of Joint Arab Action, whereby these systems shall conform to the goals of the next phase of Joint Arab Action; to enable the League and all the institutions and agencies of Joint Arab Action to be informed of pan-Arab requirements and keep pace with new developments in the regional and international arenas."

- "To take the necessary steps and adopt the appropriate methods to reform all the financial, administrative and organizational aspects of the Secretariat-General in order to develop its structures, improve operational methods and enhance performance."

213. In the light of the mandate, I undertook an exhaustive study of the manner and means of implementing this great and historic task. After assuming the duties of Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, I familiarized myself at close quarters with the features and systems of Joint Arab Action and methods of implementation. I held important discussions with Arab leaders and senior officials of Member States, as well as lengthy discussions on aspects of the subject with distinguished Arab politicians, officials, academics and experts in administration. With a team of experts, I studied all the documents, projects and ideas of Member States on development of the systems of Joint Arab Action. I referred, too, to the League's experience of the process of development throughout its history, as well as studies carried out by Arab research centres. I studied the experiences and adjustments of regional and international organizations in the process of reform and development. I also benefited from my experience as a member of the international body formed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in November 2003, comprising 16 international figures, which presented an outline of the challenges facing the world and what might be done to reform and develop the United Nations to confront these challenges and achieve balance in the United Nations agencies. My experience increased my understanding of the defects in the Arab system and conviction indeed, certainty, of the need to speed up its development on the basis of an ongoing process integrated with a series of steps combining to achieve the required modernization, development and reform.

214. In the same context, I was keen to hold regular bilateral or joint meetings with all the heads of specialized organizations working within the Arab League framework to consult, exchange views and study the many ideas and proposals on the working of the Arab system.

215. I sought the assistance of the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) in preparing models for developing the systems of Joint Arab Action, including restructuring of the League's Secretariat-General, and presented my own ideas, as well as the outcome of discussions, working papers and projects provided by Member States and research centres, with the aim of arriving at the most suitable and efficient structures.

a. The main features of Joint Arab Action prior to the Amman Summit of 2001

216. It is important to define the main features of Joint Arab Action during the decades prior to the Amman Summit (2001) to enable us to formulate practical and executable ideas that respond to the vision of the development of Arab Action across the board. These features are as follows:

- The Arab system is bulky, encompassing numerous agencies, having followed the United Nations in creating specialized bureaux and organizations; it contains agencies behind agencies of various kinds: organizations, funds, professional federations, ministerial councils and sector-based permanent committees. Additionally, there is the rapid advance and new role of Arab private sector organizations, chambers of commerce and industry etc. and civil society organizations working in various fields.

- This large number of organizations, conferences and committees suffers from a manifest and serious deficiency namely, on the one hand, the absence of coordination and on the other, the absence of a supervisory body that can extract from all this activity and noise something to enhance Joint Arab Action with perceptible effect. Moreover, the end product of this bulky system does not match the amount of effort and time expended on it and fails to produce the desired yield.

- The mechanisms of working are dispersed and weak, leading to a duplication of tasks and conflicting courses of action. This has resulted in a clear diminution of the influence of the League and its mechanisms at the practical level, regionally and internationally and, in consequence, an erosion of confidence in the Arab system.

- There is an absence of Arab media competence in dealing with the real, collective problems of the Arab world, even in presenting pan-Arab issues. The collective Arab media have not risen to the level needed to deal with these issues, which require to be addressed from more than one angle. They include how to keep pace successfully with global developments by magnifying what are, for us, the positive aspects and addressing the negative aspects. What is needed are high-level capabilities and a system that is quick to act and to react.

- The existing Arab organizational structure, particularly the Secretariat-General, could keep pace with events, either in terms of understanding, follow-up, experience or how to deal with and address them. It does, nevertheless, possess abilities that with care, encouragement and updating in thinking and method through training programmes and a strong political, material and organizational incentive, can rise to the required level of responsibility.

- The creation of an Arab technical corps within the Secretariat-General to bolster the notion of specialization will attract outstanding elements from the Arab world, capable of genuinely supporting joint action among Arab States.
- There should be a distinction between functional grades and positions within the Secretariat-General and incentive for the hard worker with outstanding potential and abilities to advance within the system and, with his abilities and experience, contribute to the direction of activity in the Secretariat-General without being subject to the plodding bureaucratic criteria of seniority currently prevalent.
- On the other hand, the lack of clearly defined responsibilities, as well as the absence of training and study opportunities, with their material requirements and benefits, has led to the loss of incentive among many to work diligently to acquire the new skills required and develop their existing talents. Likewise, the policy of reward and sanction, conforming to the objective principles in force other regional and international organizations, has not been applied. The deficiencies in the salary scale have led to the Secretariat-General, given its inability to respond to the laws of supply and demand in the labour market, being deprived of the best Arab expertise. This has resulted in a lack of high-level technical specialization and the small number of top-flight experts in the League with the necessary technical capabilities or ability to express a considered opinion on issues relating to the various aspects of the Arab States' joint action and the inability of the organizational structure to keep pace with developments and new issues in the regional and international arena, deal with an urgent international situation or embrace technological developments in modern administration to make use of information technology and modern techniques in the exchange of information and communication.

b. Principles upon which the reform and development process is based

217. The inertia and backwardness of the system resulted in the need to make essential changes by adopting a concept of development that takes into account the existing negative aspects and addresses these by using modern administrative methods, on the following bases:

- All departments and sections should appear clearly in the organizational structure so that responsibilities, tasks and relationships between the parts of the operational system with the Secretariat-General are defined.
- The organizational structure should, as far as possible, be flexible and not contain many levels, making possible application of the policy of reinforcement and principles of reward and sanction to all in a systematic manner, through defined responsibilities and tasks and, likewise, giving the possibility of self-development in accordance with new factors and through practice and application.

- Integration of the elements in the organizational structure requires the building of separate specializations in politics, economics, social affairs, culture, the media, governance, administration and information technology to serve joint Arab interests, streamline the work of the Secretariat-General and respond to the needs of Member States in the relevant areas.
- The elements of the new organizational structure should respond efficiently and effectively to new issues, regionally and internationally, as well as to issues relating to sectors previously neglected within a League framework that, in the past, gave priority to a small number of issues. These issues should be assigned the proper weight in the structure, which should reflect the ability to deal with and respond to new issues.
- Organizational competence should be developed as new issues in Joint Arab Action arise, particularly in relation to the regular convening of the Arab Summit, which requires preparation, follow-up and measures to implement resolutions, at a high level of competence.
- The leadership level of the Secretariat-General should be reorganized among commissioners and assistant secretaries-general such that there is a collective leadership at the side of the Secretary-General and under his chairmanship, capable of taking part in drawing up strategy, producing plans and preparing programmes.
- The structure should attract, not repel, outstanding and experienced individuals to work in the Secretariat-General through application of the concept of empowerment of outstanding individuals.
- It is essential that the structure and the measures for its implementation observe the employment allocations of States, such that all the Arab States are represented commensurately with the best Arab talents.
- Salaries should be raised; this will not cost much in the light of the many pensions it has been decided to discontinue during the last three years and rationalization of numbers which, given the savings achieved as a result, could finance the proposed salary increases.
- Expenditure should be rationalized, with financial resources allocated to areas of importance to Joint Arab Action, in accordance with previously agreed programmes and plans, such that the League's budget becomes one of projects and programmes. This is reflected in the new budget through the weight given to priority issues.
- The desired development implies the necessity of automating the Secretariat-General, which should adopt the most modern information and communications technology available.

c. The new organizational structure

218. Within the framework of the above observations on the features, organization and working methods of the Secretariat-General, and in the light of the factors governing the concept of development stated above, the new organizational structure was built upon foundations giving prominence to vital and

qualitative issues having a close link to current developments at regional and international levels. The structure relies basically upon the building of specialization within the various departments and divisions, which have become the pillars of the organizational structure, and the empowerment of a specialist cadre at middle and executive levels. The structure reflects the goals of the League of Arab States in the coming phase by the appointment of Arab individuals with technical and professional weight and experience in Arab societies as commissioners, assuming the management of activity of a number of recent issues or issues imposed by international and regional events that require radical development and particular attention.

219. Additionally, the structure has introduced directorates concerned with organizational issues required by development that has taken place or is expected to take place in Joint Arab Action; this includes the creation of the post of Assistant Secretary-General for Council Affairs at all levels and the post of General Supervisor for Economic and Social Council Affairs.

220. The vision of the target development has focused upon two specific issues:

1. Development and restructuring of the Secretariat-General as the centre of the centre dimensions of Joint Arab Action and the principal agency concerned with monitoring and follow-up of and preparation for all Arab action;

2. The manner of initiating development of the entire Joint Arab Action system, particularly on the economic, social and cultural fronts.

d. Establishment of the system for convening Summit sessions

221. A radical development of Joint Arab Action took place following the adoption of a resolution at the extraordinary meeting of the Arab Summit in Cairo (2000) adding an annex to the Charter of the League of Arab States on the annual convening of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level. This required a major overhaul of the work of the Secretariat-General and entire Arab system in order to deal with the Arab situation, reinforce Arab solidarity, and draw up plans to ensure that Arab capabilities in various fields are strengthened.

222. The success of the Arab States in introducing the institution of the Summit into the structural and institutional system of the League and enabling it to convene meetings within this framework on a regular basis is an extremely important development and strong evidence of the existence of change in the stance of Arab States vis-à-vis the League. In particular, this trend was given concrete form at the session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in March 2001, in the resolution mandating the Secretary-General to reform all aspects of the Secretariat-General in order to be informed of pan-Arab requirements and keep abreast of new developments in the regional and international arenas.

II. Restructuring and modernization of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States

Mechanism of the Secretariat-General

223. The restructuring of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States dealt with the organizational, financial and functional aspects. The process began with a definition of areas of deficiency and shortcoming latent in the previous structure. Thereafter, it was possible to define a concept for the required development, which focused on the features of structural and functional development agreed by the Council of the League at summit level. Specifically, this entailed creation of the post of Arab Commissioner to assume leadership in respect of work on new issues (the dialogue of civilizations, civil society) or existing issues for which progress requires radical development. For this, Arab individuals with outstanding experience and practical ability in their fields, in addition to commanding broad Arab respect, were chosen.

224. The restructuring of the role of the assistant secretaries-general was carried out to establish oversight of the organizational and sector-based operational mechanisms in the Secretariat-General and achieve broad representation of Member States in leadership positions in the Secretariat-General. For the first time, a woman was appointed to the position of assistant secretary-general.

225. The creation of the position of Deputy Secretary-General, chosen from the assistant secretaries-general for a specified period in order to monitor and coordinate the Secretariat-General's operational mechanisms.

- The use of a rational system for contracting the high-quality experience the work of the Secretariat-General requires on the basis of fixed-term contracts linked to specific programmes and projects. This is more objective, responsible and technically rigorous than the current situation but will, however, be made in parallel with the creation of a permanent, functional cadre, strong both educationally and professionally.
- The framework governing permanent appointments has been made highly competitive, both in respect of the aforementioned diplomatic corps and the administrative and technical cadre (distinguishing between them), through written and oral examinations and in accordance with Member States' quotas, which will be exceeded only within the narrowest of agreed limits and after taking specific measures. This will result in a rationalization of the League's bureaucracy and reduce numbers, with reliance upon outstanding individuals to which the system gives opportunities for progression and advancement in line with criteria of performance, diligence and discipline. This will perhaps lead to a gradual change in the present 2:1 ratio of permanent staff to contract staff to one of 1:1, given the natural reduction in the Secretariat-General bureaucracy as staff retires.
- The creation of a strong mechanism for training, human development, professional performance appraisal and monitoring of all staff. This is reflected in the new organizational structure, where a department concerned with these matters has been created, independent from that concerned with staff administrative matters (leave, entitlements, etc).

- Work is currently underway studying the situation of the League's overseas missions and evaluating their performance in order to boost their role and strengthen their performance of political, economic, media and other tasks by providing them with the essential, qualified manpower to achieve their goals and improving the financial situation of staff to offer an incentive for outstanding individuals to work in these missions (the current situation leads to many seeing financial advantages to working abroad whereas life in Cairo is more stable materially and in terms of family). This study also involves the possibility of establishing League missions as need dictates, even if only on a temporary basis, and honorary missions as required, by agreement with émigré communities.

226. It should be noted here that the 117th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level adopted resolution 6203 (10 March 2002), which resolved to:

- Increase the housing allowance of the heads of overseas missions of the League by 50%;
- Grant a housing allowance to staff of overseas missions of the League of 50% that stipulated for heads of missions;
- Move toward affirming the roles of managers of departments, heads of divisions and supervisors of desks to assume primary responsibility for work and development in order to encourage the role of young men, build up their experience and train them by stages on an ongoing basis, while the role of assistant secretaries-general will, as previously stated, be to provide supervision, coordination and direction.

227. The elements of the organizational structure given space for specialized capacity building and skills development among staff, to enable them to deal effectively and efficiently with important issues in a range of fields. New blood will be injected into the administrative apparatus of the Secretariat-General by opening doors to the appointment, by competition, of young men from Member States with the skills, linguistic competence and ability to deal with modern technologies, to attract capable individuals from the Arab world with the ability to understand modern diplomatic procedure and duties to underpin Joint Arab Action and to improve the position of staff during their service and after, when they reach the age of retirement.

228. Promotions will be made twice annually to address the employment backlog created by the freeze on promotions.

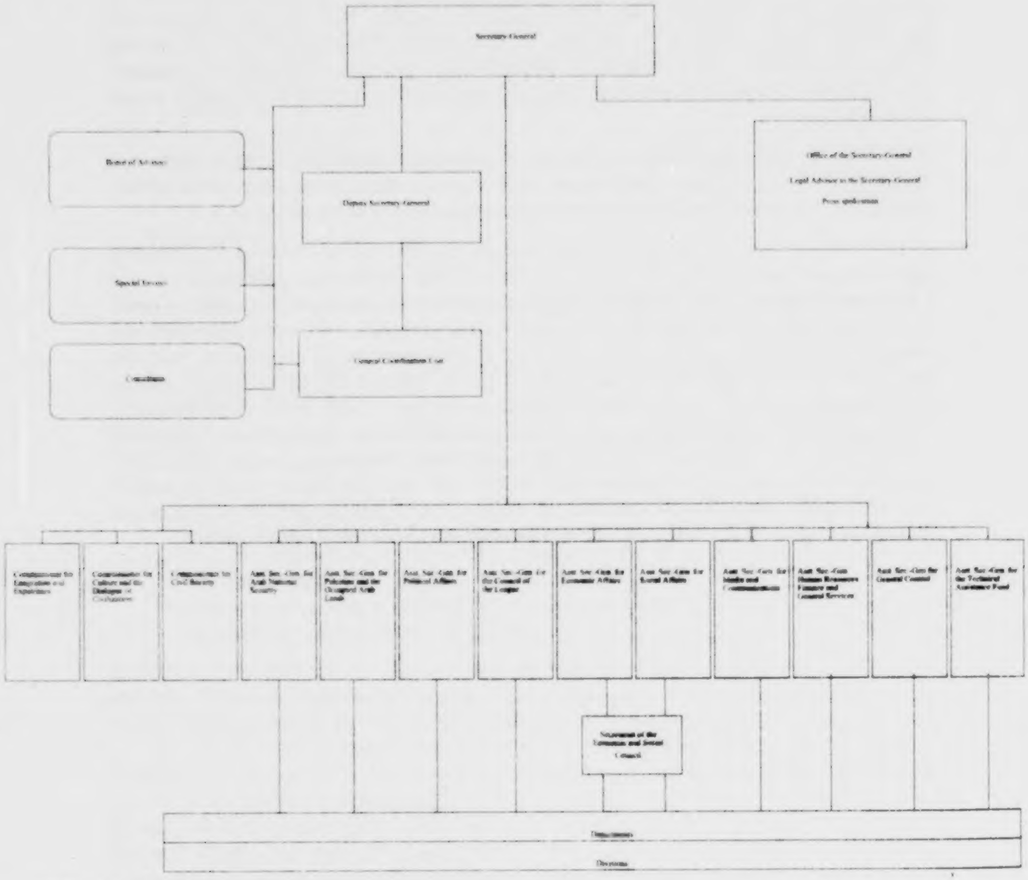
229. To raise the level of specialization in certain desks, we shall arrange to organize training courses with the United Nations Commission for Human Rights and International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) in particular, on the basis of the memorandum of understanding signed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva on 17 April 2002 and the verbal understanding with the Director General of IAEA. We shall also endeavour to conclude agreements with international bodies specialized in disarmament to accept trainees.

230. The new organizational structure is also designed to encourage departments to decentralize and facilitate the process of the timely and prompt receipt and circulation of information by all bodies. Specialized divisions have been set up within departments. The structure has observed the widest participation of nationals of all Member States in this system at department and division level to enable action to be collective.

231. The internal organization of the Secretariat-General has been put in place and the duties of the various departments and sections have been defined in detail, something the Secretariat-General has been in need of for some time.

232. I have striven to rebuild the structure of the Secretariat-General by applying the new structure with effect from 1 July 2002. With my colleagues in the Secretariat-General, I have allowed for greater flexibility in the new system in order to provide for self-development through actual practice. We also observed the distribution of centres of weight at the core of the structure, in accordance with the new facts of Joint Arab Action, particularly in the light of the Arab Summit giving new competencies to the Secretary-General, requiring a high level of preparation, follow-up and evaluation of issues, tasks and decisions. A pan-Arab diplomatic corps within the Secretariat-General will undertake this task. I have added new departments to deal with contemporary global and regional issues, such as human rights, disarmament, civil society and the clash of civilizations, abolished others and rationalized one- third. This reflects remarkably positively on League activity.

The League of Arab States
Sector of Human Resources, Finance and General Services


Secretary-General
Board of Advisers
Special Envoys
Consultants
Deputy Secretary-General
General Coordination Unit
Office of the Secretary-General
Legal Adviser to the Secretary-General
Press spokesman
Commissioner for Emigration and Expatriates
Commissioner for Culture and the Dialogue of Civilizations
Commissioner for Civil Society
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Arab National Security
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Palestine and the Occupied Arab Lands
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Political Affairs
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for the Council of the League
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Economic Affairs
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Social Affairs
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for Media and Communications
Asst. Sec.-Gen. Human Resources Finance and General Services
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for General Control
Asst. Sec.-Gen. for the Technical Assistance Fund
Secretariat of the Economic and Social Council
Departments
Divisions

[illegible] organizational structure

Automation of the Secretariat-General

233. Any organizational, functional or structural development of any institution can only be made in parallel with development that includes working methods, information and communications technology and compliance with the language of the technology of the age. Automation will enable the Secretariat-General to keep pace with analogous regional and international organizations as regards information and communication systems. A special department was established to assume responsibility for the technical side of these issues, in addition to the training of staff of the Secretariat-General in the use of available applications and programs to streamline work and raise the level of competence and automation.

234. It should be pointed out here that this subject has special priority in the process of restructuring and modernization of the Secretariat-General. Due to the lack of financial resources in the Secretariat-General and through communication I conducted on this matter, I am grateful to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) for providing a grant of US$ 1,000,000 to the Secretariat-General, allocated in full for the financing of this project, implementation of which commenced at the beginning of March 2002.

235. Computer systems and the basic programs necessary to put this phase into operation were supplied and measures necessary to automate several activities and operational areas of the Secretariat-General were completed: the necessary databases were created for financial affairs, personnel and procurement; electronic mail and electronic archives for fundamental and historic League documents were instituted. Trials commenced at the start of 2003. The requirements for a League web page on the internet were met and an internal information network (intranet) was designed to provide the necessary information to facilitate the work of the League's administrative apparatus and staff, as stipulated.

236. A Secretariat-General training room has been equipped and a number of training programmes implemented for staff of the Secretariat-General at various functional levels in the areas of automation and information technology. Numbers of staff were sent for training in automation methods to South Africa, Germany and the United States, pursuant to agreements and grants from governmental and international bodies. A number of other training programmes are currently being implemented in order to provide the human resources necessary to operate the new equipment and systems and raise the level of competence of the Secretariat-General administrative apparatus.

237. All telephone centrals at the headquarters of the League were replaced with advanced systems and equipment to ensure full modernization of regional and international telecommunications.

238. It is necessary to move on to study the technical and financial needs for completion of the next phases of the plan for development and modernization of the work of the Secretariat-General. Full provision of the systems and equipment necessary to automate the remaining activities of the League, completion of the linking and exchange of information between the League's departments, employees, overseas missions and specialized Arab organizations, the training of staff of the Secretariat-General and overseas missions will ensure that the competence of staff is raised and guarantee the proper level of operation, maintenance and development of systems already implemented.

Financial reform of the Secretariat-General and rationalization of expenditure

239. The process of development and reform of the deficiencies in the budget of the Secretariat-General involved action in two directions:

- That the League's budget be a projects budget and not a wages and salaries budget, resulting in the allocation of financial resources in a planned and rational manner; the budget for the financial year has been drawn up on these lines;
- The taking immediate measures to rationalize expenditure, with effect from June 2001.

240. Shortly after being appointed Secretary-General of the League of Arab States in the middle of 2001, I realised the importance and necessity of paying special attention to solving the long-standing financial crisis of the Secretariat-General caused by its meagre budget, problems related to the payment of contributions and resulting impact on the desired programmes and projects of the League and its specialized organizations.

241. From 2002 onwards, I raised at successive sessions of the Council of the League the subject of development of the Joint Arab Action system by adding new duties to the work of the Secretariat-General in the areas of the dialogue of civilizations, human rights, the participation of civil society institutions in the work of the League, attention to expatriate communities, relations between regional and international groupings and expansion of programmes relating to care for the family and children. This new conception of the nature of Joint Arab Action demanded a review of the activities and programmes of the Secretariat-General, the budget approvals allocated to these and the proposal of practical solutions to the problem of payment.

242. In this context, I presented details of the financial position of the Secretariat-General to the Tunis (2004) and Algiers (2005) Summits. I explained the importance of doubling budget approvals for the activities and programmes of the Secretariat-General to cover the duties mandated by the Council of the League at summit level and duties of the sectors of the Secretariat-General and remove the causes of the chronic financial crisis from which the Secretariat-General suffers and consequent paralysis or impeding of its ability to carry out its duties and meet commitments. The Council of the League at summit level expressed particular interest in this proposal and adopted resolutions 258 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) and 321 (Algiers, 23 March 2005). The most important clauses of these resolutions were:

- To call upon Member States to comply with the provisions of article 29 of the financial bylaw and pay their contributions within the first three months of the financial year;
- To call upon those Member States that have not paid their uncontested financial contributions for 2003 and 2004 to pay these before the end of March 2004;
- The payment of 10% annually of uncontested arrears to 2002, in addition to a state's annual share;
- To call upon Member States that have stipulated reservations on their percentage contributions to lift these;

- To create a general reserve of US$ 35,000,000 over a period of five years with effect from the 2006 budget;
- To discuss a doubling of the approvals allocated to group 3 (activities and programmes);
- To discuss distribution of the share of States unable to pay their contributions.

243. Within the context of an objective assessment of the extent of implementation of these two resolutions of the Council of the League at summit level and the impact of this on the 2005 budget of the Secretariat-General we observe that, despite progress made in commitment to payment and the commendable lifting by some Member States of stipulations on their budget shares, the current financial situation is as follows:

i. In relation to payment of Member States' contributions during the first three months of the year

- Approximately 27% of total approvals included in the 2006 budget had not been paid by the end of the first week of March 2006.
- Not more than 46% of the total 2005 budget had been paid by the end of March 2005; by 31 December 2005, 75% of total approvals included in the 2005 budget had been paid.
- The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has not paid its budget contributions since 2003 (i.e. 4 years). A delegation from the Secretariat-General was dispatched to Libya to explain the situation but, to date, this has produced no positive results.

ii. Removal of reservations on percentage contributions

The Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Yemen have withdrawn reservations on their percentage budget contributions. The Lebanese Republic, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Kingdom of Morocco have not lifted their reservations on percentage budget contributions. The Republic of Iraq added a new reservation for 2005 and 2006, leading to a reduction of its contributions for both years to 5% instead of 10%. This rise in contested percentages yet again has resulted in them reaching 9.75%.

iii. Payment of arrears

- The State of Qatar has paid its uncontested arrears. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Syrian Arab Republic have paid the portion of uncontested arrears due for 2005.
- At the end of 2005, less than 1% of total uncontested arrears had been paid, despite the requirement of the Tunis and Algiers resolutions for payment of 10% of arrears annually.
- Total uncontested arrears at the end of 2005 were approximately US$ 118,200,000 (US$ 113,400,000 to the end of 2004 and US$ 4,800,000 for 2005).

iv. Creation of the reserve

The State of Qatar and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have both paid their contributions for 2006 (US$ 315,000 and US$ 980,000, respectively) to the formation of the Secretariat-General general reserve. This represents 18.5% of the total due for 2006.

v. Doubling of the approvals allocated for activities and programs in the 2006 budget

The 2005 budget included the sum of US$ 6,450,000 for activities and programs, while the budget for 2006 contains US$ 7,000,000, an increase of approximately US$ 500,000. In other words, the increase in approvals for activities and programs in 2006 is not more than 7.8%, which is inconsistent with the Summit recommendation to consider a doubling of the approvals allocated for activities and programs in the 2006 budget.

vi. Distribution of the shares of Member States unable to pay their contributions among other Member States

- The Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level adopted resolution 6586 (8 September 2005) stipulating that Member States unable to pay their share of the League's budget may submit a request to the Council of the League at ministerial level explaining the reasons for the inability to pay their share and make proposals for payment. This shall be done prior to the ordinary session, in sufficient time for an appropriate decision to be taken.
- This subject was put before the 125th session of the Council of the League at ministerial level, which adopted resolution 6652 (4 March 2006) stipulating agreement to the deferral to 2007 of payment by States unable to pay their contributions to the 2006 budget.
- These States have not paid their contributions to the budget of the Secretariat-General for more than ten years.

244. It will be clear from the above that the end result of the implementation of the Algiers Summit resolution on the financial situation of the Secretariat-General is modest. Payment as at 31 December 2005 did not exceed 75% of approvals on the 2005 budget, for the following reasons:

- There is a continuing lack of commitment by some Member States to paying their current contributions and arrears and non-adherence by other Member States to payment at the due time.
- Reservations continue to be placed by some Member States on their percentage contributions to the budget of the Secretariat-General.
- A solution to the problem of States unable to pay their contributions has not been reached.
- A reasonable increase in approvals for activities and programs to meet the increasing encumbrances and duties of the Secretariat-General has not been agreed.

Energizing the financial and administrative control sector

245. I have been concerned to make changes to the financial control sector, a sector of the Secretariat-General established on the basis of resolution 258 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) of the 16th session Council of the League at ministerial level within the new organizational structure of the Secretariat-General. The sector is headed by an assistant secretary-general.

246. The financial control sector was established to underline the importance of control in the areas of planning and performance, given that it is not possible for the process of modernization and development to achieve its goals if it is not conjoined with a system of control that works to monitor and implement bylaws, regulations, resolutions and the budget in a proper manner.

247. By inspection and review of all financial measures taken by the Secretariat-General and the League's overseas offices and missions, by the audit of all financial proceedings, with the aim of ensuring proper and opportune use of financial resources, control of expenditure on budget items, disclosure of full information on levels of implementation, ascertaining the soundness of measures pertaining to the financial disbursements of the Secretariat-General and from special accounts and funds, and monitoring of the League's balance sheet and the position of Member States vis-à-vis payment of contributions to the League's budget;

248. The achievements to which the sector has contributed with other sectors include:

- The intranet at the headquarters of the League has been modernized and upgraded; an intranet has also been set up in all branch offices, in preparation for connection and access to Secretariat-General headquarters;
- A contract for lines to connect the branch offices has been concluded, implemented and put into operation;
- The connection to the Internet has been upgraded;
- The electronic mail service has been put into operation;
- The installation, inspection and operation of the main service systems and key programme operating systems of the Secretariat-General have been concluded.

249. Negative elements the financial control sector has participated in addressing

The low level of payment to the Secretariat-General budget has affected the liquidity position and resulted in the inability of the Secretariat-General to implement 240 activities in various economic, political and social fields included in the action plan decided by the Council of the League. In its report for 2004, the Higher Board of General Control drew attention to the unfavourable financial condition of the League's budget and requested Member States to fulfil their financial obligations to enable the Secretariat-General to undertake its mandated duties and to complete the amendment of the statutes for employees in the light of the new organizational structure of the Secretariat-General and new designations of the sectors of the Secretariat-General.

III. Amendment of the system for adopting resolutions and the voting rules

250. International organizations contain bodies with different structures, some of which have membership open to all, such as the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Council of the League of Arab States and the Conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, while others have a limited membership, such as the Security Council of the United Nations and the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Accordingly, decision-making systems within these bodies are pulled in two different directions, one of which requires unanimity, while the other, possessing a parliamentary character, accepts a majority, either absolute or qualified, in accordance with the nature of the subject. There is no doubt that the majority rule contributes to the energizing of performance, imparts greater democracy to international political life and allows the organization's general stance to come to the fore, while preserving the principle of equality among Member States whereby each has one vote, although it does not exclude abstention or the reserving of judgement on resolutions.

251. The current phase of the international order is distinguished from that of more than five decades ago by three basic features:

- The size of membership: this has increased enormously since the inception as a result of accepting new members. Examples of this are many: membership of the United Nations has increased from 55 to, currently, 191 members, the European Union increased from 6 to 15 then to 25 members and the League of Arab States has tripled membership from an initial 7 Member States when it was established in 1945 to 22 Member States currently. This increase in membership creates difficulties for decision-making. It is inconceivable that unanimity should be the basic rule in voting, since achieving unanimity in a body with a large number of members is difficult and time-consuming. The resolution may be emptied of its substance or, at least, diluted. On this basis, the Charter of the League of Arab States limits the requirement for unanimity to a limited number of specific cases.
- Speed of performance: Changes in the international arena happen quickly and it is incumbent upon any international organization to keep pace, if it wishes its performance to be effective. This depends upon introduction of the element of speed into the system of decision-making and abandoning the unanimity rule, which slows down and draws out the process of decision-making.
- The primacy of the parliamentary approach in decision-making i.e., by majority, which is not limited to the procedural aspect (the voting) but also helps bring about convergence among Member States through their efforts to mobilize the necessary majority to reach a decision.

252. These three features and their results represent the rules of success and characteristics of efficient performance of international organizations at the present time. While they may all be concerned with the demands of the international order, the practice within a number of international bodies is consensus: the point of balance between these demands and respect for the sovereignty of States or, in other words, between the principle of majority and the principle of unanimity. Consensus satisfies the purpose of unanimity and performs the role of the principle of absolute majority without recourse to voting. It preserves the legal integrity and value of the

resolution and provides space for reservations. It also boosts coordination and harmonization mechanisms when drafting resolutions. The most recent example within the Arab system of the adoption of consensus of opinion is article 5 of the Annex pertaining to the regular convening of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level.

253. If consensus represents the point of converge between the principles of unanimity and absolute majority, the failure to reach consensus on some resolutions requiring prompt action has caused the practice in many international organizations of resort to a qualified majority to be used in order to pass resolutions of particular importance. This majority varies between two-thirds and three-quarters of the votes of Member States present and participating in the voting; abstentions are not taken into account when determining the numbers required for the majority. Resolutions on ordinary issues are adopted by an absolute majority of the number of Member States present and participating in the voting.

254. Two issues are connected to the subjects of consensus and qualified majority:

1. Definition of the legal quorum for meetings is calculated on the basis of the percentage of the total membership of the organization to ensure the weightiness of resolutions and breadth of participation by Member States in the discussions thereon.
2. Presence and participation in the voting are the two bases for calculating the required majority (whether absolute or qualified) and not the majority relative to all members of the organization; this to encourage members to attend and express an opinion, thus enriching the discussion and scrutinizing the resolution from all sides.

255. Perhaps adoption of the two principles of consensus and majority represents a middle course between the old approach that enjoined unanimity, which was one of the reasons (perhaps the most important being the partisanship of nations) for the failure of a number of organizations, and the modern tendency to affirm the principle of majority (articles 18/2 and 18/3 of the Charter of the United Nations, article 5/3 of the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, articles 10/2 and 10/3 of the Charter of the former Organization of African Unity and article 7 of the Constitutive Act of the current African Union).

256. On the basis of the above, the evidence points to affirmation of the principle of consensus as the general principle to be achieved when adopting resolutions at meetings of Arab League agencies, along the lines of and as a generalization of article 5 of the Annex on the regular convening of the Council of the League at summit level, so that there will no duplication or multiplicity of rules among the different agencies of one organization. If there is a failure to achieve consensus, it may be decided to adopt the principle of the agreement of two-thirds of the Member States present and participating in the voting, in the case of special resolutions on matters of particular importance (resolved on the basis of specific criteria) and by simple majority in the case of other matters.

It should be noted that that practice within the League of Arab States has tended in effect toward adjustment, as resolved at the Algiers Summit.

257. From this general perspective on the voting rules and in the light of the provisions of resolutions 247 and 248 (Sharm El-Sheikh, 1 March 2003) on development of the Joint Arab Action system and pursuant to resolution 256 (Tunis 23 May 2004) on development of the Joint Arab Action system, including paragraphs 2 and 3 calling on the Secretary-General to form specialized committees of representatives of Member States to study the proposed drafts and amendments to the Charter, draft the final wording and submit reports to the Secretary-General in preparation for presentation to the 122nd ordinary session of the Council of the League at ministerial level (September 2004) and to one or more extraordinary sessions before submission to the Council of the League at summit level (Algeria, 2005) for resolution, the following measures have been taken:

- I called for four specialized committees of representatives of Member States to be formed to study the proposed drafts and amendments to the Charter and draft the final wording. These committees met between 27 June 2004 and 13 July 2004, resulting in the preparation of an initial draft, submitted to a committee of legal and political experts, between 1 and 4 September 2004 that revised the legal wording.
- The 122nd ordinary session of the Council of the League ministerial level adopted resolution 6427 (14 September 2004), stipulating that an extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level would be held in January 2005 to consider the final wording of the draft amendments to the Charter, in preparation for submission to the forthcoming session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Algiers (2005) for adoption in accordance with the resolution of the Tunis Summit (2004).
- In implementation of resolution 6427 (14 September 2004) of the 122nd ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level on development of the Joint Arab Action system, an extraordinary session at ministerial level of the Council was convened on 13 January 2005 and resolution 6479 (13 January 2005) was adopted, under which it was agreed to amend article 6, paragraph 2 of the Charter to read: "The Council resolves upon the measures necessary to resist this aggression and shall adopt the resolution by consensus. In the event that this is impossible, the resolution shall be adopted by the agreement of two-thirds of Member States present and voting. If the aggression is by one of the Member States of the League, the vote of the aggressor state shall not be included in the count." The draft was submitted to the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League summit level (Algiers, March 2005), which adopted the amendment as stipulated in paragraphs 2 and 3: "An extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at permanent delegate level shall continue to study the establishment of a body to monitor implementation of resolutions and commitments, the rules of voting and the criteria pertaining to substantive issues and procedural issues, prior to submitting it to the 123rd ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level.
- Pursuant to the discussions and contributions of the delegates participating in the two meetings held by the Council of the League at delegate level on 6 and 9 February 2005 and the ideas and proposals presented by Member

States, the Secretariat-General prepared a draft resolution amending paragraph 7 of the Charter for submission to the 123rd session of the Council of the League.

- The subject was put before the 123rd session of the Council of the League, which adopted resolution 6485 requiring the two draft resolutions on the system of decision-making and the voting rules to be submitted to the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Algiers. The Summit agreed to replace article 7 of the Charter stipulating, "Resolutions of the Council achieved by unanimity shall be binding on all Member States participating in the League and resolutions of the Council achieved by majority shall be binding on those who accept them" with a new article stipulating,
  - The presence of two-thirds of Member States shall represent the legal quorum necessary for lawful convening of any session of the Council of the League, the Social and Economic Council and other ministerial councils working within the framework of the League.
  - Without prejudice to article 6, paragraph 2[5] and article 18, paragraph 2, resolutions shall be adopted by consensus, whenever possible.
  - In the event that consensus is not possible in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article, the following measures will be taken:
  - A decision will be postponed to the next session;
  - If the matter is of an urgent nature, an extraordinary session will be convened for that purpose within one month;
  - If consensus is not reached, it shall be put to a vote and the resolution will come into force if it obtains two-thirds of the votes of Member States present, for resolutions relating to substantive issues;
  - Agreement by simple majority of Member States present and voting, for other resolutions to which the provisions of paragraph (c) of this article do not apply, with due regard for the provisions of article 5, paragraph 4 and article 16 of the Charter;
  - The internal regulations of the councils stated in paragraph 1 of this article make clear the measures for resort to voting in the event that a consensus of opinion is impossible to achieve.
- In the course of discussions on amendment of the Charter of the League, the idea was proposed of defining the substantive issues to be adopted by consensus or two-thirds majority vote and procedural issues by simple majority. The Algiers Summit (2005) resolved to "mandate the Council at ministerial level to and the Secretariat-General to define substantive and procedural issues and the subject of implementation of resolutions at an extraordinary meeting to be held before the end of this year, in preparation for presentation to the 18th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level in Khartoum".

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[5] Amended in accordance with resolution 290 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) of the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League summit level.

- In implementation of Summit resolution 291 (Algiers, 23 May 2005) the Council of the League met in extraordinary session on 28 and 29 December 2005 and adopted resolution 6600, stipulating,
  - The presence of two-thirds of Member States shall represent the legal quorum necessary for lawful convening of any session of the Council of the League, the Social and Economic Council and other ministerial councils working within the framework of the League, pursuant to paragraph 1 of the third amendment to Summit resolution 290 (Algiers, 23 March 2005).
  - Substantive issues requiring resolution by consensus or a two-thirds majority of Member States present and voting shall be those relating to:
  - Political and security issues, including:
    - Issues relating to the maintenance of Arab peace and security;
    - The sovereignty, security and unity of Member States;
    - Pan-Arab security strategies and measures;
    - Measures to resist aggression against any Member State of the League, without prejudice to article 6, paragraph 2 of the Charter requiring consensus;
    - The settlement of Arab disputes with due regard to article 5, paragraph 4 of the Charter requiring a simple majority in relation to resolutions on arbitration and mediation;
    - Higher Arab political strategies;
    - Inter-Arab economic integration;
    - Resolutions pertaining to the boycott of Arab or non-Arab States;
    - Issues the Council decides by a two-thirds majority of Member States present and voting to be substantive;
  - Institutional and structural issues including those relating to the following:
    - Amendment to the Charter or addition of annexes thereto;
    - The creation of new institutions with the framework of the League;
    - Acceptance of new members into the League;
    - Termination or suspension of the membership of a Member State of the League, without prejudice to the provisions of article 18, paragraph 2 of the Charter requiring unanimity in the event of termination;
    - Appointment of the Secretary-General of the League and appointment of assistant secretaries-general;

- Issues pertaining to the budget, with due regard to the provisions of article 16 of the Charter requiring adoption of the budget by simple majority.

- Issues other than those included among the political, security, institutional and structural issues above, shall require resolution by simple majority of Member States present and voting.
- The provisions of this resolution shall be considered a part of the internal regulations of the Council of the League of Arab States.
- This resolution shall be submitted to the forthcoming Arab Summit in the Sudan for approval.

258. The Arab Summit (Algiers, 2005) introduced a number of key amendments to the Charter of the League to facilitate the decision-making process, cancelled the rule of unanimity and replaced it with that of consensus or, if impossible to achieve, by resort to a two-thirds majority vote for substantive issues and simple majority for procedural issues.

259. The ratifications received in relation to amendment of the text are still less than the minimum required for them to enter into force. Only the following States have lodged instruments of ratification with the Secretariat-General: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic if Yemen. The Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic have advised that they are in the process of taking the legal measures for ratification of the amendments. The State of Kuwait has advised that the amendments to the Charter are still on the agenda of the Kuwaiti National Assembly. It is important that other Member States expedite completion of the ratification measures and deposit the instruments with the Secretariat-General to enable this important amendment to be set in motion and decision-making in the League of Arab States to be stabilized.

IV. Creation of a board to monitor implementation of resolutions and commitments

The concept of the creation of the board

260. Article 18 of the Charter of the League of Arab States stipulates: "The Council of the League may consider any state that does not fulfil the duties of this Charter to be removed from the League, by unanimous resolution of Member States with the exception of the said state."

261. In order to activate this article and take sanctions against any violation of the Charter of the League and in pursuit of greater earnestness, credibility and commitment to the resolutions taken within the framework of the system of Joint Arab Action, which suffers from deficiencies due to the lack of respect for commitments, reflecting negatively on the performance of the League and its specialized institutions, obstructing a number of its activities and posing many questions at official and popular Arab levels on the extent of the sincerity of the collective Arab political will vis-à-vis the League and the same commitment to its resolutions these very States show to other international and regional organizations to which they belong,

262. The initiative presented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia included a specific proposal to create a mechanism for decision-making and impose a system of sanctions in the event of non-compliance with its obligations on the part of any Member State of the League. It was proposed that the Council of the League create a mechanism of a number of Member States to monitor the issue and submit recommendations to the Council on the sanctions to be taken against a state that fails to adhere to its obligations. Sanctions would be graduated, in accordance with procedure in regional and international organizations, from the level of censure to exclusion from meetings; the maximum sanction would be loss of membership in the League of Arab States.

263. In the light of these considerations, the subject arose of the creation of a board to monitor implementation of resolutions, which would be the principal agency for oversight of the extent of Member States' implementation of their commitments and duties as stipulated in the Charter and supplementary bylaws. It would take the place of the Follow-up and Action Committee formed after each Summit to monitor implementation of Summit resolutions.

264. To give concrete form to this, the Summit adopted resolution 293 (Algiers, 23 May 2005), under which a board to monitor implementation of resolutions was created, to consist of representatives from the Member States of the special Summit Troika and representatives from the Member States of the Special Ministerial Troika. It task would be to follow up Member States' implementation of their obligations as stipulated in the Charter or arising from resolutions of the Council of the League at summit level. The Council of the League at ministerial level, in its first ordinary or extraordinary session, would approve the board's constitution, the manner of executing its duties and its operational procedures. Summit resolution 287 (Algiers, 23 March 2005) was adopted, calling for the presidency of the 17th Summit to coordinate with the Secretary-General to invite the board to meet at the earliest opportunity.

265. In implementation of the two resolutions, the board held two meetings at delegate level on 11 June and 30 June 2005 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General and a further meeting at ministerial level on 11 July 2005 in Algiers. It studied an initial draft of the board's constitution prepared by the Secretariat-General in the light of the comments made by Member States. The board's constitution was approved at the 124th ordinary session of the Council of the League at ministerial level on the basis of resolution 6577 (8 September 2005), which defined in detail the composition of the board, its duties and the measures to be recommended by the board against any Member State in breach of its obligations as stipulated in the provisions of the Charter and resolutions of the Council of the League at summit level. These measures shall be graduated, commencing with revocation of the privileges and programmes offered by the League from the state in breach of its obligations, followed by revocation of the right to participate and vote at meetings of the Council and its committees for a period of one year, leading thereafter to suspension of membership and culminating in dismissal from the League, in accordance with the provisions of article 18 of the Charter of the League. These measures shall only be resorted to after exhaustion of all possible means of convincing the state to fulfil its obligations.

266. Numerous proposals were presented by a number of Member States, including: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the People's

Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Republic of Yemen, all of which took into account the wording of the amendments to the Charter presented to the Tunis and Algiers summits and bring about a qualitative transformation of the mechanisms of Joint Arab Action.

V. Creation of the Arab parliament

267. The representation of national political, economic and social forces in international organizations has, for a long time, been the monopoly of governments. However, a number of considerations have come together to push States into accepting the participation of other community actors in the work of international organizations and for them to have their own institutions within the framework of these organizations. Perhaps the most prominent of the considerations that have led to this development are:

- The widening and diversification of areas of international cooperation and consequent increase in the amount of tasks mandated to international organizations to achieve and promote this cooperation;
- Criticisms directed against traditional diplomacy and the call to practice an open diplomacy directed toward the incorporation of parliamentary activities in multilateral activity and in modernization and development measures;
- The increased impact and effectiveness of the role of civil society at national and international level, the opening up of the sphere of national dialogue within nations to include social, economic and professional pressure groups and interest groups and the call for similar openness at international level, particularly within the context of international organizations;
- Convergence between national political and social forces under the influence of different States.

268. There has been a gradual expansion of this trend in two respects:

1. The inclusion of representatives from these forces in the composition of delegations to meetings and conferences held by international organizations for example, the three-way composition of the delegations to the meetings and conferences of the International Labour Organization and the Arab Labor Organization;
2. The creation of special agencies and institutions restricted to representatives of these forces within the agencies and institutions operating in the framework of the concerned international organizations for example, the European Parliament and Pan-African Parliament. Both the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf and the Arab Maghreb Union have allowed establishment of a consultative council for each.

269. The resolutions of these parliaments are of either a binding or non-binding nature on the key sections in the organization; the latter approach has been dominant up to now. The situation likewise differs from one organization to another in respect

of the obligation or otherwise to adopt the opinion of the parliamentary body wh
discussing proposals put before its key agencies and before taking decisions there

270. Membership of parliamentary agencies or institutions is either by direct
indirect election, as follows:

- If the principle of indirect election is followed, the number of memb
  allowed by each state is determined and members are selected by the st
  parliament from among its members. As well as representing the natio
  parliaments, they also represent the political parties to which they belo
  They are independent from their governments, from whom they do
  receive instructions.

- If the principle of direct election is adopted in the formation of
  parliamentary body at regional level, the regions of the Member States m
  be divided into electoral districts, the numbers of which are usua
  determined on the basis of population density, and the member is chosen
  direct ballot from among the candidates, in accordance with the electo
  system put in place by the organization's parliament. Naturally, elect
  members represent their people and the political or social forces with wh
  they are affiliated. They, too, are independent from their governments, fr
  whom they do not receive instructions.

- From this perspective, the subject of the creation of an Arab parliament
  acquired particular importance. The creation of an Arab parliament operat
  within the framework of the League of Arab States system will have
  number of advantages. It will practice popular diplomacy based upon op
  and public dialogue, it will reflect the different political trends and pub
  opinion in the Arab world vis-à-vis Arab problems. It will also
  empowered to express specific positions on various issues and ma
  recommendations thereon, discuss draft budgets, treaties and regulati
  before approval by the Council and play a significant role in ma
  operational areas, such as fact-finding in Arab human rights issues, terrori
  etc.

271. As the Charter of the League has invested decision-making authority in
Council of the League at summit, ministerial and delegate levels, it will not
possible to consider the Arab parliament as having the function of the Leagu
legislative body without a specific stipulation in the body of the Charter.

272. In the light of this vision of the importance of the Arab parliament, the A
Summit (Tunis, 23 May 2004) reviewed the Arab parliament project and adop
resolution 256, of which paragraph 1 stipulated, "Amendment of the Charter of
League of Arab States pursuant to article 19 of the Charter, within the framework
the stipulations of the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity issued
the Summit, pursuant to the plans submitted by the Secretary-General of the Lea
to Member States", including the proposal for the creation of an Arab parliam
and paragraph 4 of the same resolution stipulating, "development plans in final fo
shall be submitted to the 17th ordinary session of the League of Arab States
summit level (Algiers, 2005) for resolution.

273. I undertook the necessary liaison for the creation of the Arab parliament – o
of the proposals for development of the Joint Arab Action system – w
Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese National Assembly and President of

Arab Inter-parliamentary Union, and with the Secretary-General of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union to consult and coordinate in order to crystallize the project for creation of the Arab parliament.

274. In this context, two working sessions were held on 27 and 28 July 2004 between the Secretary-General of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and a delegation from the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States to harmonize the plan submitted by the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and the annex prepared by the Secretariat-General; a preliminary design was arrived at.

275. I participated in the joint meeting in Beirut on 2 September 2004 between the Secretariat-General and the legal and political committees of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union where agreement was reached on the legal wording to amend the Charter of the League of Arab States by creating a permanent Arab parliament, to be preceded by an Interim Arab Parliament for a period of five years with equal membership from Member States (four members for each Member State); agreement was also reached on the constitution of the Interim Arab Parliament.

276. An extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level was convened and adopted resolution 6479 (13 January 2005) requiring the amendment of several articles of the Charter of the League of Arab States, creation of an Interim Arab Parliament for a period of five years, extendable for a maximum of two further years, as an interim stage toward establishment of a permanent Arab parliament.

277. At the 17th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Algiers, 2005) it was agreed to amend several articles of the Charter of the League of Arab States and add a new article stipulating the creation of an Arab parliament within the framework of the League to contribute to realizing the hopes of the Arab nation for economic, social and political development, respect for the law, the strengthening of human rights and movement toward comprehensive Arab unity. The Algiers Summit also approved the constitution of the interim Arab parliament under resolution 292.

278. Pursuant to the above and aware of the importance of developing the institutions of the Arab League and their working methods, an Interim Arab Parliament was created to take its place among the institutions operating within the framework of the Joint Arab Action system and as a platform for the different political forces in the Arab world to express their views, and thus to gauge the trends of Arab public opinion. We hope that this parliament will subsequently develop, within the specified time limit, into a body directly elected by the Arab people, as its duties increase.

279. The convening of the first ordinary session of the Interim Arab Parliament was called for 27 to 28 December 2005 at the headquarters of the League, in implementation of the Summit resolution. His Excellency Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt opened the session and Mr. Abdul Qadir Bin Saleh, Speaker of the Umma Council of Algeria delivered an address of behalf of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, current President of the Arab Summit. Dr. Mahmoud al-Abrash, Speaker of the People's Assembly of Syria delivered the address of His Excellency Bashar al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, host to the permanent headquarters of the Interim Arab Parliament.

The State of Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union made an speech and I delivered an opening address.

280. Interim Arab Parliament resolution 1 (27 December 2005) stipulated, "Until the internal regulations are approved and the office complete, the Interim Arab Parliament shall have an office consisting of a speaker and three deputy speakers, elected by majority in a secret ballot.

281. Mohammed Jasem al-Saqr, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Kuwait National Assembly, was unanimously elected as speaker of the interim Arab parliament. The speaker's three deputies elected by secret ballot were Mr. Mohammed al-Aouini, Chairman of the Committee for General Legislation and General Organization of Administration of the Republic of Tunis, Dr. Mustafa al-Fiqi, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Mr. Tayseer Quba, Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian National Assembly.

282. The committee issued a statement on the formation of a general committee of 22 members of parliament whose task is to draft the statutes of the parliament. The Interim Arab Parliament likewise authorized the speaker to invite the committee to meet at the earliest opportunity to study issues in the constitution and new business, on which the parliament in full session would be called to make a decision. The speaker of the Interim Arab Parliament resolved to invite the committee to meet on 9 February 2006 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, in preparation for which the Secretariat-General had prepared the draft internal statutes of the parliament for study at this meeting. The members of the Interim Arab Parliament resolved to consider the session open until the statutes are approved.

283. Meeting on 9 February 2006 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, the committee discussed the draft statutes of the Interim Arab Parliament and discussed plans put forward by members of parliament representing the following states: the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Lebanese Republic, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Republic of Yemen.

The committee reconvened on 8 and 9 March 2006 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General and approved the remaining articles of the statutes. The final form of the statutes of the Interim Arab Parliament would be put before the parliament in full session between 16 and 18 March 2006 for approval.

VI. Strengthening joint Arab economic and social action

a. The economic sector

284. Joint Arab economic action is regulated by a set of multilateral and bilateral agreements and grouped under this collective action there are tens of institutions. Arab economic action has progressed along a number of principal lines at regional, sub-regional and bilateral level. Relations between the countries of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf have advanced to the level of establishment of customs union and are headed toward the establishment of a single currency, which is a progressive and unprecedented step in Arab economic action.

285. At bilateral level, a large number of free trade agreements have been concluded and several Arab countries have recently moved to conclude mutual agreements designed to liberalize trade at faster rates. However, these agreements

are not linked by principles or goals qualifying them for future inclusion under a single entity.

286. A number of Arab States have made headway toward achieving their economic development policy goals, which they have sought to achieve by accession to the World Trade Organization, the signing of several inter-Arab trade liberalization agreements and negotiating with the most important trading partners to complete the liberalization of trade, in addition to applying economic reform policies in a number of areas.

287. A set of agreements defines Arab economic action, including those concluded within the scope of the League of Arab States. Regulation in the commercial sphere is considered a regional system subsidiary to the international system of trade that permits the establishment of regional blocs, ranging from the simplest, as represented by the free trade zone, to customs union, passing through more advanced levels such as the common market and arriving at economic unity.

288. However, the Arab world is still at the initial stage of regional groupings (the free trade zone that came into effect at the beginning of January 2005) and has not yet completed all the fundamentals.

Arab trade

289. Most the Arab States have adopted policies of trade liberalization and lowered customs duties. The countries of the Arabian Gulf have the lowest rates of duty and the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of Tunisia, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Lebanese Republic have reduced average customs tariffs noticeably, either within the framework of the Uruguay Round, economic reform programmes or European Partnership Agreements that resulted in a number of Arab States signing the Agadir Agreements aimed at establishing a free trade area between themselves. These are the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Tunisia, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Morocco. The Member States of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) removed customs duties at the beginning of 2005, although the repercussions of this on inter-Arab trade have not been tangible to date. This shows that customs duties are not the sole obstacle to the streamlining of trade. It has become clear that the challenge facing the Arab States in liberalizing trade in the 21st century will be more controversial and contentious than the experience of similar states in the 1990s, a result of qualitative difference in the challenges and the difficulty of repeating the same experiences.

290. The fact is that the modest level of inter-Arab trade is not basically attributable to the aversion of Arab markets to using Arab products as much as it is to the absence of knowledge of market conditions and what the markets offer. Arab States import from abroad products that other Arab States produce because systems of information, marketing and management fail to provide the Arab importer with full knowledge about available Arab production.

291. The most important reason for the inertia of inter-Arab trade is structural, attributable to the fact that the Arab States do not produce most of their needs and that their most important exports are already available to the majority of them; consequently, the outside world has become their most important customer. The problem of inter-Arab trade is, therefore, a problem of development and

diversification of production more than an issue of marketing and the removal of obstacles.

292. Approximately half of what the Arab world imports are products most of which the Arab world does not produce. There is, therefore, a clear need for the development and diversification of Arab production in three main areas:

- Foodstuffs: vegetables, meat, fish and oils;
- Equipment and means of transport;
- Tools and machinery.

Half of the Arab world's exports are based essentially on the extractive industries; this requires that we focus upon the issue of development, integration and diversification of production in Arab industry.

293. It is important to distinguish between the establishment of an Arab free trade area and the need to establish an efficient Arab economic system. The second goal is more comprehensive and works toward forming and putting place a number of systems in various areas such as trade, defence, currency, resolving trade disputes, social issues, etc. It is not limited to a single agreement but involves a series of agreements designed to establish and promote different types of Arab relations, qualifying the Arab States to participate in the formation of the 21st century from an integrated perspective.

Inter-Arab investment

294. Despite the importance to Joint Arab Action of facilitating trade, whereby a series of joint Arab ventures has come into being, amounting to more than 850 Arab and international projects with capital in excess of US$ 40 billion, total Arab overseas investment amounts to some US$ 900 billion , according to some estimates. In other words, inter-Arab investments are approximately 5.4% of total Arab investments throughout the world. The figures of the Arab Investment Guarantee Organization show that the total cumulative balance of inter-Arab investments from 1985 to the end of 2004 was approximately US$ 35.9 billion, compared with US$ 32.1 billion from 1985 to the end of 2003, an annual flow of US$ 1.8 billion. This reflects the following factors:

- A lack of suitable and sufficient investment opportunities in Arab markets and an unsuitable investment climate;
- The absence of coordination and joint action in large projects;
- The small size of Arab projects in relation to available capital, as a result of lack of market breadth;
- Restrictions on the movement of capital and the small size of Arab financial markets, the total market value of which was some US$ 152 billion at the end of 2001;
- The lack of stability in the region and the stalling of the peace process.

295. Despite this, it should be observed that the Arab investor is the largest investor in the Arab countries. Arabs are the biggest investors in their own and other Arab countries. If the scale of inter-Arab investment is below the hoped- for and expected

level, it is best to examine the real causes of this deficiency, as is clear from the factors above.

Areas of Arab cooperation

296. If joint Arab economic action has focused many of its efforts on trade, there are other sectors that require deepening Arab cooperation, such as services, investment, agriculture, industry, labour, communications, scientific research, information technology, transport, finance, financial services, tourism and construction. Many believe that the achievements of sector-based Arab cooperation exceed what has been achieved to date in inter-Arab trade. Examples of this are:

- The flow of Arab investments has exceeded foreign investments in the Arab world;
- The movement of individuals and labour, including the movement of individuals in the area of inter-Arab tourism;
- Banking services;
- Contracting;
- The linking of electricity and energy (gas) networks.

297. The numerous areas of inter-Arab economic activity, whether trade or sector-based, represent an additional gain for Arab economic action but Arab States must work to achieve a higher degree of congruence between the provisions and ground rules of inter-Arab economic cooperation, on the one hand and the framework of cooperation that binds them to foreign parties and the global economic system, on the other. The goal of the Arab States is to occupy their proper place in the global economic arena, the achievement of which is largely dependent upon their ability to embrace the language and tools of the age and handle these effectively. On the other hand, the widening gap between the systems and ground rules the Arab world works with and those that have become established globally threaten to waste the time and efforts of the Arab nation in directions of limited benefit.

298. There is a fear that collective Arab bargaining power will occupy a modest place in confronting the considerable power of other global parties, due to the disparity in the level of economic progress, the weight the Arab world has in international trade and the extent of the progress made in creating internal relations within regional groupings. This calls for a deepening of inter-Arab relations and their vertical expansion into existing and new areas, since Arab trade still hovers around less than 3% of international trade. There is no reason to delay establishing an Arab bloc to address the new, international economic situation and exploit Arab links to external groupings to improve the Arab negotiating position. This requires Arab coordination in multilateral trade negotiations with other regional blocs to which the Arab States are linked by agreements.

299. On the other hand, the creation of Arab-foreign free trade areas will generate forward pressure for a new Arab experiment based on sound foundations and make the goals of the free trade area in the Arab world more ambitious.

Services

300. The service sector is among those most suited to closer Arab cooperation, given that most services, by their very nature, are linked to culture, language and manpower. The Arab service sector enjoys the advantage of close geographic proximity between supplier and consumer, essential when service providers are required to locate to the procuring country to supply their service. Arab trade in services is considered suitable for further development in the future, on the following bases:

- Geographic proximity, reducing relocation costs;
- Cultural unity, particularly given that the movement of services depends upon the provider, human contact and mutual understanding;
- The increasing growth in the movement of goods and capital in the Arab world and the interest generated thereby in the necessary services;
- Diversification and integration of possibilities between financial resources and manpower resources and similar levels of technological progress from one country to another.

301. The Arab States need gradual liberalization and removal of the restrictions applied to the trade in services. Development of the trade in services among the Arab States has been reflected in substantial activity, exceeding in total the trade in goods. The principal service activities are:

(a) Tourism: Arab tourism represents one of the most important sources of income for many of the host Arab countries and several Arab regions are among the most popular destinations for the Arab tourist.

(b) Education services: Until the beginning of the 1970s, this predominantly took the form of the movement of students for purposes of study, which is still actively the case for university study. Thereafter, it took the form of the movement of teachers to the countries of the Arabian Gulf, Yemen, Algeria and Libya.

(c) Cultural and media services: The Arab world offers a wide market for Arab cultural production (books, newspapers, literary and artistic works), sports and radio and television channels (there are already a number of centres in the Arab world exporting these).

(d) Building and construction: The Arab region has seen encouraging activity in the movement of contracting and construction services, particularly from the densely populated states that have the capacity to provide these services at competitive cost. This corresponds to a rising demand from the rich and developing states in the Gulf and North Africa.

(e) Business services: These include professional services (accountancy, the law, medicine, etc). Social and cultural similarity, as well as unity of language and tradition has played a significant role in stimulating trade in these services.

(f) Transport services: With the increase in the number of individuals travelling to North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, passenger transport services by air, land and sea (ferries in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea) have been active. However, this development has not been accompanied by a similar development in the transport of goods, due to the modest inter-Arab trade in goods.

(g) Financial services, through

- Branches of banks operating among Diaspora communities and exchange companies; there are new ideas for the development of these services by employing electronic means;
- Banks from rich countries that have moved their activities to Arab States that have liberalized their finance and banking sectors.

(h) Communications: Recent years have seen growth in the trade in mobile telephone services and the internet. However, development of the trade in communications has not kept pace with migration and media activity, due to the monopoly by national telecommunications companies of their local markets and their lack, in some cases, of the technological capabilities and experience necessary to modernize.

The Arab States entered a new phase in the liberalization of the trade in services among themselves once the general provisions of this agreement were adopted at Arab level. A number of Arab States have submitted schedules of their commitments regarding the services to be liberalized reciprocally with other Arab States, which exceed those submitted within the framework of the World Trade Organization. Negotiations between several Arab States will commence in May 2006.

Arab economic options

302. The Arab economic world has a number of options for joint activity, of which the most important are:

- The conclusion of a new and comprehensive agreement for joint Arab economic activity, starting with the completion of GAFTA and the setting of goals and stages for Arab activity in accordance with specific timetables and by adopting of a multi-pronged cooperation strategy allowing for choice. It will also enable Arab States to accede to membership of the appropriate Arab economic activity agreements, providing for a multi-track and multi-speed Arab system.
- The development of existing Arab agreements, particularly GAFTA, faster rates of trade liberalization, the reduction and abolition of non-customs impediments and agreement on:
    - Laws on competition, monopoly and practices harmful to competition, such as subsidies and dumping;
    - Rules of origin on preferential bases, in accordance with international standards, to provide appropriate protection for Arab industries;
    - Abandonment of negative lists to liberalize trade;
    - Improvement of the situation of the free movement of capital, services and productivity factors in general;

- Facilitation of the movement of agreed categories of individuals, possibly including businessmen, officials and diplomats, to help further inter-Arab tourism.

303. According a leading and pivotal role to the Arab private sector in joint economic Action.

304. The need to prepare for moving from a free trade area to the creation of an Arab customs union, leading to a common Arab market and definition of a framework timescale of, for example, 10 to 15 years.

305. **Addressing the issue of financing on two axes:**

- The axis of development to improve infrastructure at Arab national and regional levels, serving the economic integration of the Arab States; increased provision by Arab development organizations and funds of the windows necessary for financing development projects with Arab regional dimensions; the performance of such funds will make a critical contribution to integration and development efforts;
- The axis of investment, through Arab funds or a banks, contributing to the building of regional integration, the strengthening of balanced growth in economic and social cooperation between Arab States and accelerating the process of economic development at country and regional levels; it will also contribute to the promotion of investment and movement of capital between Arab States and the financing of economic and social develop projects in Arab States.

306. Sector-based collaboration offering areas for cooperation and integration in keeping with the circumstances of individual countries at each stage of development and to achieve the greater flexibility offered by an integrated series of appropriate pan-Arab agreements systems, respecting the circumstances of the Arab States in terms of their capacities and preparedness. The need is growing to bolster the bases of economic cooperation and integration in sectors other than trade but necessary for future trade growth. The existence of more than one form of cooperation will itself be a positive contribution to the process of economic development in the less developed Arab countries, as a prelude to their qualification for accession to deeper forms of cooperation. The candidate sectors for Arab cooperation are:

- Transport, communications and telecommunications;
- Energy, the connection of electricity and gas networks and the construction of joint ventures in these areas;
- Industrial integration (engineering, textile, foodstuff, computer application industries, etc);
- Joint investments, risk protection for capital and the settlement of disputes;
- Joint scientific research programmes, industrial and technological development and the telecommunications industry with the aim of improving the Arab position vis-à-vis the digital gap;
- The adoption of an idea of economic integration based upon a philosophy and comprehensive framework within policies of internal reform, in parallel with the opening of overseas markets, to arrive at a fabric of instruments and

policies essential to advance production, attract investment and achieve economic growth. These include:

- Removal of restrictions on investment, encourage competition and develop infrastructure to attract investment;
- Curbing bureaucracy and the practices of interest groups and those who benefit from protectionism;
- Encouragement of the trade in services with an Arab cultural component, such as artistic productions, literature, education, the media and tourism;
- Reducing encumbrances on producers and exporters to international levels.

Development of the Social and Economic Council

307. Despite the priority and great importance the Arab States attach to furthering joint Arab economic action, the result of the efforts of past decades has not, in our opinion, met the ambitions of Arab Governments and peoples. Prominent elements decisive for the concept of the development of action in this area include:

- The need to work together in an effective and collective manner for regional coordination vis-à-vis the economic challenges of globalization, the demands of economic liberalization and competition for the Arab world from regional economic blocs whose strength is increasing;
- The importance of working together in an integrated and coordinated manner on a number of multi-dimensional issues that normally fall within the competency of more than one ministry or national government entity, such as infrastructure, economic or financial aspects and issues relating to reciprocal trade and services;
- The absence of adequate and appropriate mechanism permitting consultation and dialogue between the Arab parties active in the economic and social spheres: governments/business and private sectors/social welfare organizations / research centres / specialist federations.

308. If we add to the above that the absence of realism in determining the goals of joint Arab economic action and its confinement, at times, to tokenism, plus the absence of detailed follow-up has led to a situation in which convening meetings and making recommendations is itself an achievement. Many ambitious initiatives have been proposed, many resolutions passed and a profusion of agreements concluded without, in many cases, implementation being followed up. In addition, there is often overlap. This situation requires that Arab economic activity and the roles assigned to its many and diverse mechanisms be comprehensively reviewed.

309. In relation to the social aspect of Joint Arab Action, despite several recent successes in the areas of the family, woman and the child, participation in the work of the Social and Economic Council has largely been on the part of ministers responsible for economic and commercial issues, which has led to the social aspect of Joint Arab Action being largely marginalized. The social challenges of combating poverty and unemployment, establishing social security networks and developing

health and welfare services for women, children and youth require a parallel concern, in terms of priorities, to that accorded to purely economic issues.

310. I therefore made my proposal to restructure and develop the Social and Economic Council, as the focus of joint Arab economic and social activity. The best practice followed at international level and in other regional organizations for the coordination of joint activity in economic and social areas provides the underpinning for a Social and Economic Council working actively and with modern methods. Its organizational structure consists of:

(a) The heads of Arab governments or those at similar level; it is proposed to convene an annual meeting at this level between sessions of the Council of the League at summit level, in addition to two meetings of the Social and Economic Council scheduled at ministerial level;

(b) Two ministerial committees, the first responsible for economic affairs, the second for social affairs; these two committees shall meet three time per year, one of them prior to the meeting of heads of government, and their reports shall include proposals or relate to the monitoring of implementation of resolutions adopted;

(c) Technical committees, at the senior official or expert level, meeting as required prior to the meetings of the ministerial committees and of the Council at the heads of government level;

(d) The technical secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and its ministerial and technical committees; the Secretariat-General of the League shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of resolutions adopted and distribution to the various committees, as well as the preparation of studies necessary for the work of the committees at all levels;

(e) Arab private sector organizations and civil society organizations working in the area of social affairs that are recognized by Member States and accredited in a consultative capacity by the League; they shall be empowered to present their vision to enrich the discussion and interact with the measures decided by the Council, given the enhancement of the role of these sectors in the Arab world.

311. I proposed to the Arab Summit that the Council meet at ministerial or similar level. This proposal was discussed and backed by several countries, while opposed by others. In the light of discussions held by the Council of Ministers and, thereafter, in the Economic and Social Council, the Council formed a six-member committee under the chairmanship of the State of Kuwait and with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic as members, to work with the Secretary-General on development of the Council.

312. It was decided to commission a firm of experts and the committee recommended the consultancy firm Booz Allen Hamilton (Lebanon) to undertake the study on development of the Council at a total cost of UD$ 204,000. The 72nd ordinary session of the Economic and Social Council (15 to 16 September 2003) approved this recommendation and the plan prepared by the firm was discussed at the extraordinary session of the Economic and Social Council on 12 March 2004. A draft resolution was submitted to the Council at summit level and approved at the

16th ordinary session on the basis of resolution 280 (Tunis, 23 May 2004), which stipulated the amendment of article 8, paragraph 1 of the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation to read as follows:

> "The Economic and Social Council shall be created within the League of Arab States to include ministers of Member Arab States responsible for economic and financial affairs as determined by Member States, taking into consideration the nature of the Council's duties and the importance of continuity of representation and of work. The task of the Council shall be to achieve the economic and social purposes of the League and such related duties as stipulated in the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation or agreements concluded within the framework of the League." This shall enter into effect upon ratification by a majority of Arab States. The Economic and Social Council shall commence work upon completion of ratification by Member States and amendment of article 8 of the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation. In this regard, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Arab Republic of Egypt have lodged instruments of ratification with the Secretariat-General. The State of Palestine has advised of its ratification of the amendment but has not yet lodged the instrument of ratification with the Secretariat-General. The Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait and the Lebanese Republic have indicated that they are in the process of completing the legal and constitutional measures necessary for ratification of this amendment.

313. We believe that the operational priority of the Economic and Social Council in its new form should be to focus on the coordination of economic and social activity and to accelerate completion of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area to move to the next stage namely, the establishment of an Arab customs union as a preliminary to a common Arab market.

Creation of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA)

314. At the beginning of 2005, GAFTA entered its final phase and all customs duties on goods of Arab origin exchanged among Arab Member States of GAFTA were reduced to zero. Most Member States undertook to apply the last phased reduction of customs duties. Notifications lodged with the Secretariat-General report that almost all States are currently applying a customs reduction of 100% of the level at 31 December 1997.

315. As of February 2006, there are 17 Arab Member States of GAFTA: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Tunisia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Palestine, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Lebanese Republic, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen.

316. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria lodged its instrument of ratification of the Agreement to Facilitate and Develop Trade among Arab States on 4 November 2004, as a preliminary to accession to GAFTA.

317. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania has lodged its instrument of ratification of the Agreement to Facilitate and Develop Trade among Arab States.

318. Four Arab States classified as less developed Arab countries have not yet acceded; these are the Republic of Djibouti, the Somali Democratic Republic, the Union of the Comoros and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

The membership of less developed Arab countries

319. At the 14th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States in Beirut, it was resolved to exempt the less developed Arab countries from application of the phased reduction in customs duties until 1 December 2005 and that application of this reduction would commence thereupon until 1 December 2010. The Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Yemen were beneficiaries of this and acceded to GAFTA.

320. The Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Yemen will commence application of the phased reduction of customs duties and taxes with a similar effect at 16% with effect from 1 January 2005.

321. The Republic of the Sudan has lodged the notification to its customs windows with the Secretariat-General. Likewise, the Republic of Yemen has issued a similar notification to customs windows in the Yemen to apply the phased reduction of customs duties and taxes with a similar effect at 16% with effect from 1 January 2005. This notification has been lodged with the Secretariat-General.

322. The executive programme of GAFTA provides facilities from the Economic and Social Council to ease the accession of the less developed Arab countries, at the request of States wishing to do so. The Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Yemen have applied for technical support to serve the goal of their accession to GAFTA. The Arab Summit (Tunis, May 2004) resolved to establish technical assistance programmes for these countries with the participation of Arab finance institutions and to attract international sources of finance for in order to assist the accession of these countries.

323. The Arab Summit adopted resolution 274 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) affirming the exemption of Palestinian products from customs duties and taxes with a similar effect and facilitating their access to Arab markets. The Secretariat received memoranda on implementation of the aforementioned resolution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Morocco, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sultanate of Oman, the Republic of Tunisia and the Arab Republic of Egypt.

324. The Arab States have realized a number of achievements through continued monitoring by the Arab Summit and the Economic and Social Council of the progress of GAFTA. These include the removal of exceptions, ending the agricultural almanac and achieving the full liberalization of agricultural goods, adoption of a mechanism to settle disputes within the framework of GAFTA, boosting points of contact between Arab States and suspending application of the procedure for attestation of certificates of origin by embassies and consulates. The Economic and Social Council is continuing its efforts to address several other important aspects aimed at achieving the goals for which GAFTA was established, represented by increased levels of inter-Arab trade and investment. These aspects include:

Finalizing the detailed rules of origin for Arab goods

325. The detailed rules of origin for Arab goods are among the basic foundations of GAFTA, whereby it is possible to prevent the penetration into Arab countries of foreign goods benefiting from the privileges granted by GAFTA to Arab goods. Accordingly, they represent a protective fence to safeguard, nurture and develop Arab industry and produce. Likewise, they are the means to achieve integration of production among Arab States by benefiting from the cumulative rule of origin.

326. Work is currently underway on interim rules of origin, based upon the principle of the local Arab component i.e., the added value, and the method of calculating this has been determined until the detailed rules of origin have been completed. The rules of origin technical committee, set up under the provisions of the executive programme within the past few years, has been working on the detailed draft rules of origin for Arab goods. However, the committee was not able, during six meetings, to complete these rules and agreement on them has not been reached by all Member States. Several general provisions remain the subject of contention among Member States; this has had a direct effect upon the lack of agreement on the detailed rules for a number of goods.

327. The rules of origin technical committee has held ten meetings to date during which it has not been able to reach agreement on the detailed rules of origin, although it has reached agreement on the general provisions of these rules. The last (77th) session of the Economic and Social Council (February 2006) directed the rules of origin technical committee to hold another meeting to continue discussing the detailed rules and to prepare a report on those that have not been agreed, including lists of goods and the proposals by countries thereon, for decision by the Council at its session in September 2006.

Non-customs restrictions and impediments

328. The Agreement to Facilitate and Develop Trade among Arab States and its executive programmes accorded special attention to the subject of the removal of non-customs restrictions. Both stipulate the need for "the immediate removal of non-customs restrictions", reflecting awareness that these restrictions hinder the flow of inter-Arab trade and commerce and have an impact greater than that of customs restrictions, represented by a defined customs duty paid upon goods, when imported.

329. Perhaps one of the most positive aspects of GAFTA is that it has raised this important issue and made it a subject for discussion, concern and negotiation by all Arab States. It must be realized that the study of this subject requires effort and diligence. We are still at the stage of discovering these various restrictions and duties, whether on services or otherwise, the extent to which they match the service provided and other duties on services. These aspects are unclear, even to the official bodies concerned with trade in several Arab States.

330. The field groups the Economic and Social Council decided to send to Arab States have made great efforts to familiarize themselves with the various non-customs restrictions, other duties and service duties and their reports have partially clarified the existing situation in the Arab States. However, these reports require further investigation and discussion with the concerned countries. One of the most serious obstacles faced by the fieldwork groups was the attempt by all states

visited to present a picture of being in control of the situation in the country, while the private sector in many countries refrained, for a variety of reasons, from expressing a view on the various restrictions.

331. Upon conclusion of the field visits, rounds of negotiations began on determining the non-customs restrictions observed in Arab Member States of GAFTA and to reach agreement on these. In the course of three meetings, the country reports prepared by the Secretariat-General were discussed in the light of the comments by states, which agreed unanimously on the absence of non-customs restrictions, as stated by the private sector during the field visits, and that inter-Arab trade is not impeded by any non-customs restrictions. States' claims that non-customs restrictions do not exist were at odds with the annual reports issued by Member States on the progress of GAFTA that show such restrictions are still practised by Member States, without mentioning these by name.

332. The trade negotiations committee made progress in discussions on a number of non-customs restrictions that have been identified and the mechanism to remove them specified. The committee is continuing to study these restrictions by monitoring the trade policies of Arab States in the light of national reports and reports prepared by the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries.

The subject of transport between Arab countries

333. There are a number of important issues that have an energizing effect on GAFTA and a distinctly positive impact upon increasing inter-Arab trade. The subject of transport between the Arab States is one of these, whether from the administrative and procedural aspect relating to transit or the aspect relating to the increasing costs of land, sea and air links between the Arab States. The Secretariat-General put this subject before the Council of Ministers of Transport to be given priority when addressing issues of Arab transport. The Secretariat-General will likewise increase the number of meetings of the committee on the Convention of the Regulation of Transit Traffic among the Arab States in order to develop and amend the Convention, the conclusion of which will represent the abolition of a number of non-customs restrictions and impediments in force at customs windows.

Customs union

334. The Economic and Social Council is drawing up a specific plan through an executive programme under which the trade in goods and services between Arab States will be conducted within the framework of a customs union to be achieved by the target date of 1 January 2015, with the proviso that the unified customs tariff has been achieved in stages prior to this date and that agreement has been reached on the arrangements and measures needing to be taken in this regard within two years from the date the annex comes into force.

335. The establishment of a customs union among the Arab States requires that a unified customs tariff has been achieved and that goods are shipped between Arab countries without customs restrictions and treated as national goods within the framework of unified customs regulations and procedures.

336. Work shall proceed toward taking the measures designed to establish the common Arab market by 2020, within the framework of an action programme to be drawn up by the Economic and Social Council, in parallel with establishment of the customs union by 2015.

Coordination of economic policy

337. The Arab States are striving to achieve coordination and harmonization between their development plans, within the framework of the endeavour to achieve an effective level of economic integration. They are likewise consulting, coordinating and exchanging information on fiscal, monetary and banking policies.

338. In defence of Arab economic interests and to achieve Arab social development, the Arab States are undertaking intensive coordination and consultations to crystallize their common positions as far as possible vis-à-vis other regional states and blocs and, similarly, in international organizations and when participating in international conferences on economic and social affairs.

339. In support of their negotiating position, the Arab States are harmonizing their policies and the agreements concluded with foreign states in preparation for concluding collective economic agreements with their principal trading partners.

340. The Arab States will adopt the measures and policies necessary to promote coordinated, comprehensive development policies aimed at economic integration. Specifically, the Arab States are aiming to achieve development that will reduce the disparity in the growth levels of the various regions and reduce the level of backwardness of less advanced regions.

Sub-regional integration

341. There is nothing to prevent two or more Arab States strengthening and reinforcing their relations to an extent beyond that of their established commitments or entering into agreements that embrace more advanced goals in order to reinforce comprehensive Arab economic cooperation and integration.

342. Member States notify the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States of agreements concluded between themselves or between one or more Member State and one or more Non-Member State. The Secretariat-General notifies Member States of these and puts them before the concerned ministerial councils.

343. Member Arab States of the League undertake not to grant privileges to non-Arab states or blocs, in excess of those granted within the Arab framework.

344. Member States strive to reach agreements with non-Arab parties to provide additional means and paths to serve Arab economic cooperation.

Investment

345. In the light of the increasing international trend toward establishing regional blocs, the attraction of investment to the Arab region depends, *inter alia*, on the provision of a credible, transparent and stable investment environment, requiring the harmonization of Arab investment policies and laws and the strengthening of inter-Arab investment by granting investment national treatment in all Arab States. I am calling for this in the interests of an Arab investment process benefiting both parties to the investment relationship, and with the necessary guarantees.

346. The establishment of the mechanisms necessary to identify investment opportunities among Arab States and exchange information thereon and the establishment of mechanisms for joint promotion of Arab investment and provision of incentives to the Arab private sector to set up joint ventures in different spheres to achieve economic integration, interlocking production and a deepening of common interests on sound economic bases, as well as to provide the necessary protection for Arab investment in Arab States and create mechanisms to prevent double taxation.

347. I likewise call for consideration of the establishment of an Arab bank for development and investment to conduct its business activity under the agreed terms of an annex pertaining thereto or through an open agreement among Arab States. In this regard, I would like to mention that the proposals of several Arab States on the development of Joint Arab Action have affirmed the importance of establishing an Arab bank for development and investment.

Industrial cooperation

348. The success of development efforts requires diversification of the industrial production base and increased participation by the industrial sector in overall Arab economic activity by coordinating industrial activity on an integrative basis, encouraging the establishment of complementary Arab industries reflecting competitive advantage and economic feasibility, harmonizing industrial policies, specifications and standards, preparing a favourable environment for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, stimulating innovation, research and development and reinforcing human resources.

349. The Arab Organization for Industrial Development shall assume responsibility for the achievement of these goals within the framework of the provisions stipulated.

An Arab organization for telecommunication and information technology; the World Summit on the Information Society

350. In the light of the rapid technological developments the telecommunication and information technology sector has witnessed globally, the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunications drafted an Arab strategy for the telecommunication and information technology society, adopted at the 13th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Amman, March 2001) on the basis of resolution 214 on Arab cooperation in information technology and telecommunications. The Summit charged the Secretariat-General of the League and the Economic and Social Council to cooperate with the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunications to deepen and intensify Arab cooperation in the area of information technology and telecommunications, including proposing the necessary legal statutes.

351. In this context, the Republic of Tunisia proposed the creation of an Arab organization for telecommunication and information technology. The Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level, under resolution 6125 (10 September 2001), approved its creation as a governmental organization working under the umbrella of the League of Arab States and designed to strengthen cooperation between Arab States in the area of telecommunication and information technology. The agreement establishing the organization entered into force on

17 September 2005 and the Secretariat-General took responsibility for liaison on the convening of the organization's general constitutive assembly.

352. The resolutions, documents and statements of the 16th (Tunis) and 17th (Algiers) Council of the League at summit level affirmed that the development of telecommunication and information technology, the embrace of all such technologies and applications, the reduction of the digital gap by means of key tools designed to lay the foundations of an equal and balanced society and achieve development, in line with the desire of the Arab States to affirm their ability to keep pace with and participate in the development of the telecommunication and information technology sector, are considered as among the essential bases of growth.

353. The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in the Republic of Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005. The Secretariat-General had coordinated support for the candidacy of the Republic of Tunisia to host WSIS against competition from Switzerland. The result of the Arab coordination effort was the declaration from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) that Switzerland would host the first phase of WSIS in Geneva in 2003 and the Republic of Tunisia would host the second phase in Tunis in 2005.

354. The valuable outputs of a practical and developmental character from WSIS, represented by the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, express a strong political will on the part of the ITU to move toward reducing the digital gap and the desire to adopt practical formulations giving concrete shape to the agreement and opening new horizons for all societies to access telecommunication technology and global networks without hindrance or obstruction by 2015.

355. The 125th ordinary session of the Council of the League at ministerial level (4 March 2006) resolved to call upon the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunications and Information Technology and the Secretariat-General of the League to continue their efforts to monitor implementation of the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society issued by WSIS in order to enhance the capabilities of Member States to engage with the knowledge society in support of the path of development in the Arab States.

(b) The social sector

Project for the development of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs

356. Over the course of two consecutive sessions, the 24th and 25th (2004, 2005) the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs discussed the subject of the development of the work of the Council and its mechanisms. The executive office of the Council likewise devoted an extraordinary session to studying practical means of ensuring the development and advancement of joint Arab social action, by developing Council performance and expanding its field of operations. Members States were anxious to express their views and present their ideas and visions for developing the work of the Council and enhancing its role in leading social development at the pan-Arab level. During their deliberations on improving Council performance, Ministers affirmed the importance of developing the work of the Council, which should include various dimensions relevant to the vital and pressing issues facing Arab societies to be addressed in a practical and systematic fashion, leading to the achievement of progress and prosperity in Arab societies.

357. The ministers likewise affirmed that development of the Council needs to keep pace with the international changes that have been noticeable over the last two decades and that have had a profound impact on Arab societies, requiring comprehensive development of social action to create a qualitative transformation in the progress of development in all dimensions, enabling the Arab States to address the various challenges they face. They affirmed that the achievements of the Council over recent years represent a commendable effort that has contributed to the development of Joint Arab social action by changing policy directions and setting new policies that have had a marked impact on the revitalization and development of Arab societies. They likewise affirmed that development and enhancement of the Council's performance level is needed in order to improve the level and efficiency of social action to serve the revitalization of Arab societies, the progress and prosperity of the Arabs, to secure the foundations of institutions and reinforce their ability to steer the process of social progress.

358. The Arab Ministers of Social Affairs agreed that development of the Council's work would include putting forward practical and substantive solutions leading to the improvement of its performance and mechanisms to ensure effective, collective performance, keeping pace with changes and developments, contributing to meeting the challenges and making the Arab nation capable of dealing with the developments and advances around it. Development of the Council's work and its mechanisms should involve the following areas:

Areas of action and related issues

359. Capacity-building and development of workers in all social work specializations; the exchange of experience on the formation of cadres to work in the area of social development; the training of cadres working in the various fields of social work and development of their practical and educational potential; the improvement of their skills in conducting research and studies and preparing reports by use of the most modern scientific methods in the social sciences; standardizing scientific language and research methods in the Arab States by standardizing training methods, manuals and academic programmes in use in Arab training centres, under the supervision of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs; training centres shall coordinate with each other in drawing up plans and programmes in accordance with resolutions and charters of the Council requiring actual application on the ground.

360. Setting a phased action strategy for the Council that shall have clear features, methods and goals, taking the form of action plans and programmes to ensure effective implementation of goals; drawing up a list of priorities for joint social projects that must be implemented; scheduling these in accordance with scientific criteria and the actual needs of Member States, in collaboration with funding and support bodies.

361. Attention to the study of social phenomena representing a fundamental threat to social cohesion, particularly that of poverty, the fight against which shall be included as a permanent item on the Council's agenda; combating poverty by developing and encouraging social research (the concepts of socio-economic indicators); the necessity of accurate social statistics; the Council will monitor the social development needs of Member States and meet these through planning, the

provision of technical assistance and of the actual funding needed to implement these programmes to meet needs.

362. Attention to the development of action programmes for the disabled; the creation of a database on the disabled and their special characteristics; the integration of disabled persons into society through employment; drawing up plans necessary to ensure their active participation in social development; the activation of measures adopted to ensure the integration of the disabled into normal social environments such as the home, school and workplace; the allocation of sufficient development programmes to give support and maintain their dignity and humanity.

363. The Council shall draft general, model plans and documents for guidance in various areas of social development and work toward standardizing legislation relevant to social conditions; it shall compare regulations on social protection by studying possibilities for the standardization of current legislation in Member States, taking into account the pioneering experiences of several Arab States and enabling the incorporation of methods of human development within the source documents and general goals of Joint Arab Action; it shall focus on social projects it is possible to implement in individual Member States to serve the goals of joint social action throughout the Arab nation in the same areas, to benefit all Arab countries; integration shall be brought about between projects and social work institutions; and there shall be commitment to the scientific planning that will balance goals, needs and essential resources to achieve social development.

364. The inclusion of a permanent item on the Council's agenda for the study of the most significant recommendations and conclusions of studies made at pan-Arab level relating to selected cases, with the aim of agreeing the pan-Arab measures required.

365. To place the development role of civil society organizations on a secure footing, enabling them to play their part in achieving the well being of society through sustainable development programmes and the participation and socio-economic empowerment of families and individuals; to endeavour to increase resources and allocate funds for local government to ensure the demands of local development are met; to promote investment in local development projects; to encourage the role of non-governmental organizations, increase the role of civil society institutions and associations and federations of businessmen and women to achieve development in villages, local units and slum areas.

366. To enhance collaboration in the field of joint scientific research in the study of phenomena related to social change; to standardize the operational rules and regulations of social organizations and associations to ensure proper management of funds and progress of work and to ensure appropriate representation of women on their administrative boards.

367. To standardize reference sources on social action and compile a list of standardized terms for the Arab States; to prepare Arab training manuals with standardized concepts and methods; to activate Arab strategies and agreements with a social development dimension; to ensure the integration of governmental and non-governmental development organizations and the optimum investment of available resources and potential.

368. To strive to unify Arab positions vis-à-vis thorny social issues dealt with at international summit conferences and follow up these every five years; to

standardize the methods and principles of drafting national and pan-Arab periodic reports monitoring implementation of the recommendations and resolutions of these conferences; to set out a common vision on controversial subjects; the effective participation of the Council and its technical secretariats in international conferences to ensure an Arab role in the formulation of action programmes, declarations and strategies adopted by these conferences.

369. To endeavour to conclude genuine, ongoing partnerships with international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations, specifically those concerned with issues of the funding of development in developing countries, and to organize joint activities with these; likewise, to coordinate programmes and plans in all areas of social affairs.

370. To address social development by means of an inclusive concept embracing all issues related to development and adopt human development methods on the basis thereof; to incorporate qualitative issues in social action on the Council agenda and present these issues transparently; to devise clear and specific action programmes to confront the obstacles to social progress in the region; to promote Arab and Islamic values of social solidarity and cohesion, such as alms taxes, religious endowments, charity and philanthropic gestures in the financing of social action and meeting the wants of the needy, and to establish a developmental role for these values to reinforce the course of development in Member States.

371. To affirm the development role of social action and the need to adopt methods that integrate social development and economic growth within a comprehensive framework of development; to create the required linkage between economic and social action in the Arab countries and at the level of Joint Arab Action; to enhance currently existing methods; to create programmes suitable for the development of local societies; and to set integrated strategies for social development in the Arab world, taking into account the disparities that exist within countries and between Member States and in their development achievements, while observing the characteristics of the social situation of these countries, ensuring social and developmental convergence in the Arab region.

Proposed mechanisms for monitoring implementation

372. The formation of multi-specialization technical committees consisting of consultants and experts on a part-time basis, as required, in implementation of resolutions adopted or within the agreed policy framework; the composition of these committees should pay due regard to the participation of experts from different Arab States and committees should enjoy a substantial measure of independence; they should strive to monitor the actual social development needs of Member States and anticipate future social changes that may occur in Arab societies and the impact of these on social cohesion.

These committees shall coordinate their practical activities with various Arab universities and research centres and submit studies and recommendations to the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs for study and submission to the Economic and Social Council. They shall rely at all times on the views of experts and specialists on issues relating to joint concerns in order to furnish the Council's resolutions with a scientific and methodical character, especially when implemented in the field.

373. In its work, the Council shall rely upon precise scientific criteria and methodology by creating a modern, efficient, integrated Arab information system of social indicators incorporating all development data and indicators in the Arab States. It shall be characterized by adequacy, accuracy and credibility, make use of the highest levels of technology in reviewing data and information and employ computer technology. The Council shall strive to give as much explanation and clarification as possible of the methods and procedures followed in data collection and processing, ensure harmony between national and pan-Arab priorities and clarify the analytical frameworks so that States might benefit from the data collected. It will be necessary to follow the development of indicators with qualitative studies and research to explain the driving forces of a phenomenon, to develop a methodology to determine priorities and give clear forecasts and predictions, address problems of determining at which level a phenomenon becomes worthy of study and provide comparative time series. The information system must also possess flexibility and the capacity to respond to the demands of modern social progress. The packages and programs used in creating the information systems must be organized to achieve an integrated database and establish harmonized and standardized indicators to avoid repetition and duplication.

374. To develop the work of the coordination and monitoring committee, supported by specialists, as required, in order to study the documents on the Council's agenda and the recommendations and proposals of various seminars, training courses and discussion groups, submitting its recommendations to the executive office for adoption and preparing annual executive action programmes. The work of the committee shall have the same function as preparatory sessions for meetings of the Council and be concerned in particular with preparing files and draft resolutions in a manner capable of application, for possible adoption.

375. It is essential that Member States undertake to prepare reports on the implementation of Council resolutions and accomplishments in this respect, between Council sessions. These reports must include the measures taken in this area so that courses of action can be corrected and obstacles to meeting commitments removed.

376. Subjects placed on the Council agenda shall receive adequate time for debate and discussion and the Council shall listen to statements by ministers, to include the most significant achievements of their ministries, the challenges faced and their views on social issues on both the Arab and international fronts.

377. To involve civil society institutions and non-governmental organizations in the work of the Council, according them a consultative capacity; striving to involve the Arab private sector in the concerns of social action and employing its potential in the service thereof; democratic participation at all stages of social action, including implementation, on the grounds that the beneficiaries from this partnership shall be those participating in it; to direct social action to all individuals in the Arab world, including those with special needs, with the aim of achieving the social integration of all groups and individuals in society, ensuring cohesion and unity of the social fabric; to provide for the role of civil society in the work of the Council in order to enrich social action in solving the problems associated with unemployment, poverty, women, children, youth, the disabled and the elderly, within the framework of Arab Summit resolutions and the relevant criteria and regulations adopted by the Economic and Social Council.

Relations with the Economic and Social Council

378. The relationship between the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and the specialized ministerial council is one of coordination and with the Economic and Social Council it is a standard, institutional one. In this context, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs may be considered as directly responsible for all social matters put before it by Member States, its executive office, technical secretariat, the Council of the League of Arab States or other bodies and councils. In view of the operational linkage between the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Council and in order to avoid duplication, the necessary operational relationship between the two must be regulated, particularly by treating the Economic and Social Council as the council that may submit recommendations from the ministerial councils to summit level, in coordination with the Council of the League at ministerial level, in order to avoid squandering effort and energy without achieving the intended aims and objectives of Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs.

379. In this respect, the high-level participation of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs in the social council formed within the framework of the Economic and Social Council is essential.

The Arab Fund for Social Action

380. Member States must undertake to pay their shares to the Arab Fund for Social Action, increase their contribution thereto, lift reservations on its funding and create new sources of financing capable of providing the necessary liquidity to meet the various activities and programmes of the Council. They must develop the Arab Fund for Social Action, place it under the supervision of a sub-committee of the Council with the task of creating the means of ensuring an increase in resources, enabling it to expand its programmes in such a way that the Fund will be a genuine and principal financer of development and provider of support to social projects and programmes in Member States.

There shall be participation in the financing and planning of social action programmes through the involvement of various forces in society and by providing a greater number of channels for participation in the implementation of social projects by both government and civil society organizations, such that multiple sources of financing will constitute an economic and social investment and benefit, will push societies toward achieving the desired growth, enabling them to acquire the experience and capability to continue to meet the needs of future generations.

The Arab Strategy for the Family

381. International concern for issues of the family crystallized with the declaration of the United Nations in 1989 that 1994 was to be the International Year of the Family. The declaration was designed to raise awareness of issues and the role of the family, increase concern for the problems and challenges that affect the family and family members and bolster the efforts of national institutions concerned with setting and implementing policies relating to the family.

382. In the spirit of this declaration, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs adopted a number of resolutions on the International Year of the Family, which included:

(a) To call upon Member States to participate positively in the events held on this occasion;

(b) To charge the Secretariat-General with preparing an Arab Declaration on the Rights of the Family in collaboration with the competent bodies in Member States for submission to an Arab conference to be convened for this purpose;

(c) To call for the translation of this declaration into executive programmes and schemes for the benefit of the Arab family;

(d) To make 7 December each year an Arab Day of the Family, to affirm continuity of concern for the family and family issues.

383. Within the framework of preparation for the celebration of the Arab Day of the Family in December 2002, the Arab Women's Committee, one of the committees constituted by resolution of the Council of the League of Arab States, recommended that a conference be held under the title, "Toward a Strategy for the Arab Family"

384. In collaboration with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in the State of Qatar, the Secretariat-General of the League organized a conference designed to establish the key features of the Arab Strategy for the Family, held in the city of Doha from 6 to 8 January 2003. Ministers of Social Affairs from six Arab States participated in the conference, together with a large number of those concerned with family issues from 19 Arab States.

385. The conference resulted in the Doha Declaration, containing a number of important recommendations, of which the principal ones are:

- Consensus upon the framework proposed by the conference for the features of the Arab Strategy for the Family;
- To call upon the League of Arab States to address the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, the Council of the League of Arab States and the next Arab Summit conference on including the issue of putting the Arab Strategy for the Family on the agenda;
- To call upon the League of Arab States to form a committee of experts from the Arab States with the task of formulating the final draft of the Arab Strategy for the Family in preparation for submission to the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, the Council of the League of Arab States and the next Arab Summit conference for adoption.

386. On the basis of the pan-Arab responsibility requiring that priority be given to the family and that its position as a tool to further development be strengthened, and recognizing the changes and challenges the Arab family has faced and will face, the effects of which transcend the general political and economic aspects to reach the very soul of the family and the non-material elements of its structure such as values, beliefs, modes of behaviour and lifestyle, the setting of an Arab Strategy for the Family that defines the features of improving its situation and affirming its functions in the light of these changes, has become a vital matter requiring the highest levels of attention and support by Arab decision makers.

The Secretariat-General reformulated the draft Arab Strategy for the Family pursuant to comments from Member States. The draft strategy was adopted at the 24th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs (5 December 2004) and recommended for submission to the Council of the League. The Arab Strategy for the Family was adopted at the 17th Arab Summit (Algiers, 23 March 2005) as a contemporary Arab document to guide Member States when setting or revising their national strategies for the family, in line with ratified Arab and international charters and operative laws and statutes, with the participation of the institutions of Joint Arab Action in contributing to achievement of the goals of the strategy. The Secretariat-General is to be informed of the measures taken by the competent authorities in Member States in this regard.

The advancement and empowerment of Arab women

387. Cognizant that achieving a comprehensive solution to the social and economic problems of Arab society is dependent upon the participation of women in the various areas of development, and believing that improving the position of women and achieving their advancement has become an urgent and fundamental issue occupying the first rank of priorities in every state, the League of Arab States has paid much attention to Arab women's affairs. It has taken and continues to take measures designed to further their situation, strengthen their position and enable them to pursue their multiple roles in social development.

388. The Arab Women's Committee, a specialized, technical committee along the lines of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), with a membership that includes representatives of Arab Member States, in coordination with national agencies concerned with women's affairs, was created to affirm the role of women and strengthen Joint Arab Action in this respect.

389. The Committee, meeting on a regular basis has, with its technical secretariat, consistently proposed Arab strategies, plans and action programs in implementation of various activities designed to advance the position of Arab women, monitor implementation of resolutions and recommendations of specialized Arab ministerial councils and boost collaboration with national and pan-Arab councils and committees concerned with women's affairs in Member States.

390. A number of achievements have been made in this important area, including:

- The publication of the *Strategy for the Arab Woman to the Year 2002*;
- The publication of the *Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005*;
- The convening of a high-level Arab conference (Amman, 1996), resulting in the adoption of an Arab action programme for the advancement of the Arab woman;
- Preparation for international conferences on women (from Mexico City in 1975 to Beijing +5);
- The convening of an Arab conference on "Women and Poverty" (Morocco, 2001);
- The holding of seminars and workshops relating to the issues of the Arab woman;
- The publication of a unified Arab report on the achievements of the Arab States and the challenges of implementing the Beijing and Beijing +5 Platform for Action;

- The organization of a training programme to develop the capacities of male and female workers in national agencies concerned with women's issues, 1997-2004.

391. These achievements accompanied a tangible development in the situation of the Arab woman and in indicators of advancement in various economic, social and legal areas and participation in decision-making. They also accompanied a strengthening of the mechanisms pertaining to women's affairs in Member States, such as the creation of ministries, higher councils or commissions for women.

392. The League of Arab States continued its efforts and, with the start of the third millennium and proliferation of the challenges confronting development, the progress of the Arab woman commenced upon a more effective course with the convening, at the initiative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, of the first Summit of Arab women, on the theme of "Present Challenges and Future Prospects" (Cairo, 2000) and the extraordinary Summit (Cairo, 2001). The second Summit was held on the theme of "Arab Women: New Vision" (Amman, 2002).

393. These summits led to a qualitative transformation in addressing Arab women's issues and produced important results, including the establishment of an Arab women's Summit every two years, the year 2001 to be the year of Arab women, the convening of symposiums to study women's issues, the setting of strategies for the advancement of Arab women, the creation of the Arab Women's Organization (AWO), which the 116th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States (10 September 2001) agreed to establish, in keeping with the requirement of the Charter of the League to strengthen cooperation among Member States in all areas within the framework of the League, as a governmental organization with an independent corporate identity, and to refer the subject to the Economic and Social Council. The goal of this organization is to contribute to strengthening joint Arab collaboration in developing the position of women and the empowerment of women. The agreement of establishment came into force on 1 March 2003.

394. Within the framework of the support given by the Tunis and Algiers summits to the advancement of the Arab woman and achievement of equality, the strengthening of awareness of the Arab and Islamic values and principles that ensure the rights of women and their role in society, the enactment of the legislation necessary to protect women and remove all forms of gender discrimination, the *Compendium on the Position of Women in Arab Legislation* was released at a ceremony held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 15 March 2006, on the occasion of International Women's Day, observed in March each year.

395. Likewise, within the framework of the League's concern to strengthen the role of Arab women in various areas of development, to give prominence to the radiant face of the Arab woman and shed light on the gains that have been made by honouring a distinguished elite of pioneering Arab ladies in various fields, the first session of the Distinguished Arab Women's Awards was held on 28 April 2004, within the framework of the League of Arab States and under the auspices of the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the Participation of Arab Woman Studies Centre, Dubai.

The rights of the Arab child

396. Aware that children are the future of their nations, the League has devoted increasing attention to the Arab child. This has been evident through proposing and setting policies, establishing programmes, plans and strategies and conducting of studies and research directed at improving the position of the Arab child, in addition to monitoring the efforts of Member States in children's welfare, protection and development.

397. In affirmation of the protection of the Arab child, the subject has been put before Arab summits from the Amman Summit (2001) to the Tunis Summit (2004). The *Arab Framework for the Rights of the Child*, a contemporary Arab document on the rights of the child drafted by the Secretariat-General, and the Second Plan of Action for Children were adopted as guidelines for Member States to conform to ratified international charters, when setting and reviewing national plans for children.

398. Within this framework, the Second Arab High-Level Conference on the Rights of the Child (Cairo, July 2001) was held and agreement reached regarding the wording of a statement of the unified Arab position on the draft final document of the Special Session on Children of the United Nations General Assembly (Second International Conference on Children) and the Cairo Declaration to activate the mechanisms of Joint Arab Action, under the heading, "Towards an Arab World Fit for Children".

399. The Third Arab High-Level Conference on the Rights of the Child (Tunis, January 2004) adopted the Second Plan of Action for Children, drafted by the Secretariat-General and approved by the Tunis Summit, as a ten-year plan for the years 2004 to 2015.

400. On 1 October each year, the Secretariat-General celebrates the Year of the Arab Child. A cultural symposium is organized in which a distinguished elite of the new generation of outstanding and creative Arab talent in the fields of science, sport, literature, the arts and computer science, nominated by Member States in accordance with specific criteria, participate and in the course of which the "*bayt al-Arab*" Medallion for excellence and creativity is awarded. The celebration adopts one of the rights of the child as its theme each year and organizes the events of the celebration around this.

401. In collaboration with the regional office of UNICEF, the Secretariat-General undertook a study entitled, *An Arab World Fit for Children* on the reality of childhood in the Arab States, the draft of which was submitted to the Third Arab High-Level Conference on the Rights of the Child (the Republic of Tunisia, 2004). The conference adopted a resolution calling upon Member States to have the draft studied and reviewed by their relevant agencies and to provide the Secretariat-General and UNICEF with comments to reformulate the draft in the light thereof. The study was released on 11 April 2005 by the headquarters of the Secretariat-General in Cairo.

The Arab strategy to combat poverty

402. In common with many other societies, Arab society suffers from the phenomenon of widespread poverty from which a number of social problems result. This phenomenon has its socio-economic causes and dimensions.

403. Regional and international changes have led to an increase in the severity of this phenomenon, which regional and international conferences, particularly those held in the 1990s, have sought to address. In view of the gravity of the phenomenon in the Arab world, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs adopted, in 2000, a resolution requiring a discussion to be organized on the subject of poverty and its effects upon Arab society.

404. A forum on poverty and its effects was held in the Republic of the Sudan in January 2002, in which representatives from Arab Ministries of Social Affairs, civil society organizations and research centres, as well as experts, participated. From this forum, a draft strategy to combat poverty emerged.

405. The Secretariat-General put the subject of the phenomenon of poverty in the Arab World before the 14th session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level and the Council adopted resolution 240 (28 March 2002), stipulating the following:

- To give maximum priority in development programmes in Member States to policies addressing the phenomenon of poverty;
- To request the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Council to accord maximum importance to issues relating to poverty and to consider these as a permanent item on their agendas, and to charge the Secretariat-General with monitoring and coordinating with Member States to set practical strategies and programmes at Arab level to address the phenomenon of poverty;
- To charge the Secretariat-General with coordinating with Member States and Arab and international organizations and bodies on participation in the implementation of programmes related to addressing the phenomenon of poverty in the Arab world.

406. On the basis of resolution 284 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) the Arab leaders welcomed the Arab strategy to combat poverty, directing that it be referred to the Economic and Social Council to establish the mechanisms for its harmonization with the comprehensive economic plan.

Arab Decade for Persons with Special Needs 2004-2013

407. Concern has increased at local, regional and international levels with the issues of those with special needs and a number of declarations, agreements and rules have been issued, affirming the right of the disabled to a life of independence and dignity and calling for the provision of suitable conditions for the disabled, allowing them to be self-reliant and contribute to development.

408. In 1975, the United Nations agreed upon an international Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and, at the initiative of the Government of Libya, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons. One of the results of this was that the General Assembly of the

United Nations declared 1983-1992 as International Decade of Disabled Persons, after which 1993-2002 was proclaimed the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons and 2000-2009 the African Decade of Disabled Persons.

409. In 1993, the United Nations approved the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities as a framework for achieving full and equal participation of the disabled in social life and the development process. It was also resolved to appoint a special rapporteur to monitor implementation of these Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. In 2003, the Secretary-General of the United Nations entrusted this task to Sheikha Hissa bint Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani of the State of Qatar.

410. Alongside developments in the issues of those with special needs at regional and international levels, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs discussed the declaration of an Arab Decade of Disabled Persons and adopted a resolution to hold an Arab conference on disability to help crystallize this.

411. The conference was held in Beirut in October 2002, in collaboration with the Arab Organization of Disabled People (AODP), the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Delegations from 18 Arab States, including relevant governmental organizations, civil society associations, organizations of the disabled, experts and disabled persons with varying levels of disability participated. This conference produced the text of the Arab Decade for Persons with Special Needs project.

412. On the basis of resolution 283 (Tunis, 23 May 2004) the Arab leaders approved the Arab Decade for Persons with Special Needs (2004-2013) to guide Member States in setting national strategies.

Youth and sport

413. In the course of the 24th, 25th and 26th sessions (2001, 2002, 2003), the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sport examined the subject of developing the Council's activity and mechanisms by considering ways to ensure the promotion and advancement of joint youth and sport activity through enhancement of the Council's performance and expansion of its areas of activity, in accordance with its goals and aspirations. Member States presented their views, thoughts and visions to achieve this.

414. Aware of the importance of Arab voluntary work, the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports proclaimed 2001 as Arab Voluntary Action Year. Arab States have adopted the principle of youth welfare within their manpower development efforts to achieve their own aims and in line with the higher goals of the Arab nation of Arab unity, sustainable development, the advancement of Arab youth and promoting self-development. Accordingly, the Council issued the Arab policy document on youth and sport (2001), which essentially reflects social development goals in the fields of youth and sports and addresses the problems and difficulties that confront the integration of youth into the sustainable development of the Arab nation. The fifth of July each year was proclaimed Arab Youth Day.

415. Within the context of the concern of the League of Arab States and the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports, their ongoing desire to develop the creative skills and intellectual capacity of youth, as the promise of the future and foundation for the progress of nations and civilizations, and to encourage them to show their

talents and creative energies in the fields of science, invention, literature, the arts and creativity, an Arab youth prize for creativity in science, the arts and culture was instituted in 2003.

416. A number of resolutions have been adopted to encourage pan-Arab sports, the most important which are: support for the hosting by Tunis of the Mediterranean Games, approval of the regulations for the Pan-Arab Games, approval of the regulations for the Arab School Games, agreement on the unified statutes of the Arab Sports Federation (2003) and agreement on the establishment of the Arab University Sports Federation under the umbrella of the League of Arab States (the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports), given the large numbers of youth in university education and the importance of their participation in sports. The League of Arab States collaborated in the joint meeting of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports and Ministers of Information at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General to draw up detailed proposals on the integration of media policies and youth and sports policies in the Arab nation, the preparation of media programmes aimed at youth in the Arab world, the broadcasting of Arab sporting events and to study the issue of television broadcast rights for sporting events in the Arab world for the benefit of Arab youth.

Health

417. Since 2001, technical meetings have been held annually on issues of preventive genetics, such as medical inspections for the early diagnosis of genetic disorders and congenital defects, pre-marital examinations, the establishment of pre-marital guidance clinics, as well as in the area of the formulation of health laws and legislation, including legislation regulating the teaching and practice of nursing, legislation on licensing and registration, the advisory law regulating supervision of foodstuffs, issues of health insurance, alternative medicine, medical negligence and its consequences and legislation to combat tobacco and tobacco products.

418. The unified guide for blood transfusion services in the Arab nation was issued in 2005 and an award for the best blood transfusion service department was approved. Approval was given to a procedures guide for the central registration of medicines in the States of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, the documentation on good manufacturing practice for pharmaceuticals, studies submitted by the Arab Union of Manufacturers of Pharmaceutical and Medical Appliances, prioritising procedures for the registration of Arab pharmaceuticals and standardization of the registration requirements for pharmaceutical products.

419. The fund of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health provided financial support to the amount of US$ 100,000 to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in 2004 and again in 2005. The amount of US$ 50,000 was given to the Ministry of Health in the Republic of Iraq in 2004. The amount of US$ 15,000 was given to the Arab Council for Medical Specialties and the same amount to the Centre for the Arabicization of Health Sciences. Support amounting to US$ 20,000 was given to Somalia in 2005 by the recruitment of 20 health workers trained at the High Institute of Public Health in Alexandria. The amount of US$ 50,000 was given to support the Arab Conference on Family Health.

420. The executive office of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health, in emergency session on 24 January 2006, discussed essential preventive measures against avian flu and the exchange of information and experience among Arab States, the World

Health Organization (WHO) and the technical office of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health.

I called for a meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health on 15 March 2006, attended by a number of Ministers of Agriculture, to coordinate action, positions and plans to combat this disease. The Council affirmed the commitment of all states to full transparency on this matter and prompt notification of any case of infection or suspected infection. The Council demanded that training courses be held urgently for doctors, specialists and workers in all executive bodies of the Ministries of Health and Ministries of the Environment in the Arab States. The Council likewise affirmed the need for international drug-manufacturing companies to provide it with sufficient quantities of vaccines at an acceptable price and for cooperation with the WHO to support the production of vaccines by drug companies in the Arab States. The Council likewise affirmed the call to hold another joint meeting in the second half of this year.

On this occasion, I would like to stress the need to draw up the necessary strategies to ensure the health of the peoples of the region, while preserving national resources. I would also like to make mention of the joint consultative meeting of Ministers of Health and Agriculture of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf and the joint consultative meeting of Ministers of Health and Agriculture of the Maghreb States. These represent preliminary, pre-emptive measures against the repercussions in the region from the transmission of this disease.

The pan-Arab Project for Family Health and population policy

421. The pan-Arab Project for Family Health is a unique example of Arab-Arab and Arab-international cooperation, designed to serve all groups of people in the Arab region (men, women, children, youth, the elderly, the disabled and those with special needs). It has provided data from a study of 246,000 families across seven Arab States: Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Djibouti, Yemen and Lebanon. The survey in the Sudan (North and South) will conclude shortly.

422. The results of the project's studies represent a regional database within the League of Arab States and include data on: the socio-economic characteristics of all family members, family living and environmental conditions, the spread of chronic disease and its treatment, disabilities, malnutrition, matters relating to family planning and reproductive health, mother and child welfare, youth issues and sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS.

423. Among the achievements of this project are the training of more than 1,400 male and female trainees in the collection, processing and analysis of data and its use in setting health and development policies, and the holding of 12 regional workshops on the design, implementation and analysis of data. Project methodology was consolidated by the issue of 12 technical papers covering all stages of the implementation of field studies. The project also issued 17 reports and 27 in-depth analytical studies of the results of the country surveys; seven country seminars were held.

424. In view of their accuracy and credibility, the project data is used by international and Arab bodies, principally the United Nations and its agencies (the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and WHO), the World Bank, the United States Census Bureau in Washington and a number of universities. It

should be pointed out that the project is being implemented in Libya and Mauritania and work is currently underway to prepare for implementation in Iraq, Palestine, Somalia and several Gulf States.

425. Work on population issues has undergone noticeable development in recent years. As a result of their awareness of the importance and effectiveness of national population councils and committees, the great majority of Arab countries have implemented various population growth measures, at the level of scientific research, population programmes and projects, national coordination and dialogue and the adoption of population strategies and plans. Regional activity in the area of population policy has undergone institutionalisation by expansion of the partnership and inclusion of civil society organizations and the maximum use of population indicators in the preparation of general and national development policies. The Department of Population Policies, in continuous collaboration with UNFPA, has organized joint activities to exchange experience, study experiments and create national population committees for support and cooperation on issues of population, development and emigration.

426. In this context, an action plan for 2000-2004 was prepared, focusing on population and development issues and challenges. The regional report on Arab emigration was published for the first time in 2003, dealing with the issues and dimensions of the Arab labour migration and including a diagnosis of the most significant characteristics, mechanisms and ramifications of Arab labour migration both between Arab countries and abroad.

427. With the aim of assessing the first ten years of implementation of the recommendations of the International Population Conference, a series of studies was prepared on the key dimensions of population and a field evaluation survey of achievements was conducted and submitted to the Arab Population Forum (2004). As regards the identification of population indicators and challenges at the Arab level, issues of the *Population Additions* magazine were published. A conference was organized on emigration that proposed directions for alternative policies and issued a paper on the most up-to-date research on Arab migration.

428. As regards the inclusion of population dimensions in development policy, the Rabat Declaration on population was published for Arab parliamentarians, the Cairo Declaration on population (2002) was approved and an Arab plan to incorporate reproductive health issues in school curricula was approved.

429. A plan for the empowerment of Arab youth 2004-2007 was drawn up and a paper entitled, *The Arab Declaration on Empowerment of Youth* was prepared by drawing on a number of studies, the available quantitative and qualitative data and background studies prepared for this purpose, together with a number of relevant Arab and international papers.

430. Among the scientific proceedings held in parallel with WSIS (Tunis, November 2005) was a seminar on the migration of skills and the information society, organized to study how to close the digital gap between the Arab States and the developed countries by means of the educated who have emigrated to the latter, how they might contribute to the development of their countries of origin and the best sorts of information and telecommunication technology, experience and skills to achieve this.

(c) Participation of civil society organizations in the Economic and Social Council

431. The importance of civil society organizations is increasing at the present time in the light of significant and influential political, social and cultural changes. The progress in information and telecommunication technology and dramatic expansion of the internet has helped to expand the scope of action of these organizations by providing instant, efficient and inexpensive interconnection. These organizations have begun to play an increasing part in the public life of Arab societies and the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States has striven to collaborate with Arab non-governmental organizations to create a partnership based upon sound institutional foundations.

432. The creation of a Commission for Civil Society Affairs, with Mr. Taher El Masri designated as Arab Commissioner for Civil Society Affairs, and the creation within the structure of the Secretariat-General of a Department of Civil Society Affairs, crowns the previous efforts in this direction that aimed to establish a solid foundation for energizing collaboration with Arab civil society institutions.

433. Arab Summit resolution 280 (Tunis, 23 May 2004), restructuring the Economic and Social Council stipulates the following:

434. Arab civil society and non-governmental organizations and associations approved by Member States may attend meetings of the Council and its committees as observers by invitation of the Secretariat-General, in accordance with the guidelines set by the Council and Secretary-General.

435. Under resolution 1540 (6 January 2005) of the extraordinary session, the Economic and Social Council agreed the criteria and guidelines for the participation of civil society organizations as observers at Council meetings. These criteria and guidelines were put into operation in drafting the bylaw amending the Economic and Social Council.

436. The Secretariat-General drafted a form to be completed by civil society organizations wishing to participate in meetings of the Economic and Social Council, taking into consideration the criteria and guidelines agreed by the Council.

437. The form was circulated to Arab States for comment, in the light of which it was finalized and distributed to Arab States for information. It was sent to civil society organizations and placed on the web site of the League.

438. The subject of the participation of civil society organizations in meetings of specialized Arab organizations was raised at meetings of the Higher Coordinating Committee. Through their ministerial councils, these organizations seek to involve civil society organizations in meetings, utilizing the criteria agreed by the Economic and Social Council.

Specialized Arab institutions and organizations

439. Within the framework of strengthening economic and social cooperation, I would like to draw attention to the important role played by the institutions of Joint Arab Action and the members of the Higher Coordinating Committee for Joint Arab Action. I have received reports on the activity of a number of specialized Arab organizations namely: the Council for Arab Economic Unity, the Arab Administrative Development Organization, the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid

Zones and Dry Lands, the Arab Labour Organization, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Arab Satellite Communication Organization, the Secretariat-General of the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization.

440. I have also received reports from a number of Arab finance institutions that are members of the Higher Coordinating Committee namely, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation. I follow with great interest the activity of the Arab Academy for Banking & Financial Sciences, the Arab Cities Organization, the Union of Arab Banks and the General Arab Insurance Federation.

Chapter 3: Modernization and development of the Arab international media action plan

441. In November 2001, the Secretariat-General began a political campaign in the media to confront the wave of hostility against the Arabs in the international media and, likewise, to challenge the idea of a conflict of civilizations and its repercussions. The initiative began with the symposium of Arab intellectuals I called for in November 2001, under the theme "The Dialogue of Civilizations: Exchange not Conflict". This symposium resulted in a framework action programme to correct the picture of the Arabs and Arab culture in the international media, widen the sphere of understanding of the Arab stance and call for a repudiation of the ideas of a conflict and clash of civilizations.

442. Continuing this initiative, I directed the concerned sectors in the Secretariat-General, its missions and agencies to participate actively in international events held to discuss this subject.

443. In the same context, the Secretariat-General responded promptly to the 2005 initiative of the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Zapatero, for an alliance of civilizations. This reflects the eagerness of the Secretariat-General to use every political and media window to prevent a worsening of the trend linking Arabs with terrorism, a trend which is being exploited by elements hostile to the Arabs to broadcast hatred in a manner designed to implant a distorted impression of the Arabs, Arab culture and Arab thought and have a negative impact on the Arab world's strategic interests.

444. This view was the frame of reference for my proposal, in the form of a proactive initiative to the 35th ordinary session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Information at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General (20 June 2002) for the creation of media monitoring posts in the USA and Europe to monitor instances of the broadcast of hatred against the Arabs in the media and assume responsibility for an immediate media – and even legal – reaction in such cases. In view of the financial situation of the Secretariat-General at the time, we had to be content with the creation of a media-monitoring unit at the League's mission in Washington; it is hoped that the establishment of a media-monitoring unit in Europe will be considered.

445. In the face of escalating anti-Arab propaganda, in a manner suggestive of serious repercussions before long, I proposed to the Council of Arab Ministers of Information during a consultative meeting shortly before its 38th ordinary session, the urgent need to update and develop the Arab media campaign in the international

arena, define the commitments arising from this and determine responsibilities of implementation and follow-up. In response, the Council of Arab Ministers of Information adopted resolution 244 (8 June 2005), which, in summary, stipulated:

- The prompt updating and development of the Arab external media plan, focusing on five axes namely, giving prominence to political reform and social modernization efforts in the Arab world; the Palestinian issue; clarification of the Arab stance against terrorism; the Arab identity and Arab position on the dialogue of civilizations; and the efforts of the Arab States in the areas of human, economic and social development;
- The urgent convening of a group of media experts to update and develop the plan;
- The convening of an extraordinary session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Information to adopt the updated plan and determine commitments to financing and implementation.

446. In implementation of this resolution, I directed the Secretariat-General to call for an urgent meeting of the group of experts and prepared a reference file for the team, containing all the documents and working papers necessary for the task. The meetings of the working group resulted in establishing a framework group of mechanisms for the new media initiative.

447. This was approved by the Council of Arab Ministers of Information meeting in extraordinary session at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 4 February 2006. The resolution included:

- Agreement to allocate US$ 22,500,000 in five instalments to fund projects and programmes of the updated plan during a five-year period;
- Prioritization of eight projects for implementation in the first year of the updated plan;
- To entrust implementation of the updated plan to the Secretariat-General.

448. To help expedite application of the updated plan approved by the Council of Arab Ministers of Information, the Secretariat-General prepared the requested paper, including details of projects, stages of implementation and costs.

449. Eager that efforts to update and develop the projects and programmes of the international Arab media initiative bear fruit, and cognizant of the delicate situation of international media reaction, with developments of the past few months revealing an urgent need for effective Arab media mechanisms able to take a proactive role in confronting the wilful media distortions of the image of the Arabs and Arab civilization, beliefs and values, prompt action is required to provide the financial resources necessary for the new plan adopted under resolution 276 (4 February 2006) of the extraordinary session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Information, enabling it to be implemented by the Arab League in accordance with the specified priorities and regions.

Chapter 4: The process of development and modernization in the Arab world

450. The process of reform and development in the region began some years ago and is still continuing. Arab summits have spoken of this and numerous measures have been taken to realize political, economic, social and cultural reform. Nevertheless, we in the Arab nation known that the road is still long and that history is in a state of constant movement, requiring that the continuity of the reform and development process needs to be protected. The matter requires growing awareness and continuous support. Likewise, it is axiomatic that there must be coordination between Arab countries and the attainment of a reasonable degree of international understanding. This requires a stable and secure region, where the perception prevails that the regional issues which form its conscience and are part of its memory have been set upon a sure and certain path to a just, comprehensive, credible and peaceful solution.

451. This process depends upon giving free rein to liberty, guaranteeing human rights and needs, affirming freedom of the press and expression, economic modernization, human development, development of the judiciary, advancement of education, expansion of the knowledge base, acquisition of technology and the exact sciences, the participation of youth and empowerment of women to contribute to the social development.

452. Curbing extremism in Arab societies needs to be carried out in conjunction with ensuring that other societies take corresponding measures to curb extremist tendencies against Arab and Islamic societies and peoples. Fair and just stances must also be adopted toward issues of concern to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

453. Dealing with a region in which history, belief, identity and civilization play a significant role requires taking into account that its peoples and public opinion will not be reassured until a genuine, comprehensive and just peace in relation to the Arab-Israeli dispute is seen to be taking its course, and the foreign presence adopts the role of friendship, not coercion. It is no different from other regions of the world in dealing with others, in the age of globalization, on the basis of balanced joint interest, not by the imposition of hegemony and control, double standards or demanding submission to its dictates.

454. On the other hand, it is not possible to ignore, delay consideration of or be unconcerned about the unbalanced security situation across the Middle East. At the top of the security concerns is the issue of weapons of mass destruction. The removal of weapons of mass destruction from the entire Middle East, including Israel, and the accession of all states in the region to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and other similar agreements in force, is a fundamental to determining the future security and stability of the Middle East region.

On the subject of regional security, the interconnection should be pointed out between Arab security and the security of the Mediterranean and Europe, on the one hand, and Arab security and the security of the Red Sea, Horn of Africa, Indian Ocean and the Gulf, on the other. Arab security, in effect, needs a process of arduous preparation and negotiation in which the Arab States and others take part. It requires an atmosphere of understanding and stability to exist that will help to restart the Arab-Israeli peace process on the agreed bases and principles, and without bias or violation of international legitimacy in relation to Israel's ending the occupation, the full withdrawal of its forces and the national right of the Palestinian people to establish a viable, independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, taking all elements of the Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut, 2002) into account.

The quest for regional security must, according to the proposed model, take its course in parallel with a credible peace process resuming on various tracks to ensure the just outcome that the principles on which it is based and the resolutions and documents that govern it were designed to achieve.

455. Nevertheless, it must be affirmed that the process of radical development in the Arab world enhances democracy, affirms the importance of good governance and advances the principles of human rights. It will steer the process of building a knowledge society and developing educational institutions to narrow the gap in information technology and other areas of science, the arts and literature, and even close it altogether.

The history of Arab culture and the true principles of religion enable us to embark on this process, affirming fixed values while adjusting to change and launching the process of development at the same time, in an integrated pattern that receives the consent of the Arab people, releases their capacity for creativity and progress and involves them in a process of modernization that must spring from the conviction and interests of the people and be founded upon their consent.

456. The Arab States, realizing the problems from which their societies suffer – and these are developing societies that suffer from the same problems as other developing societies – will strive to address these and not hesitate to take the radical measures necessary.

457. Any initiative or ideas relating to the future development of the Arab nation will only be successful and flourish if they emanate from its own land and with the consent of its representatives at all levels. The relationship of the Arab world with its neighbours will always be governed by factors of trust and credibility and will be peaceful as long as justice and the determination to resolve outstanding problems in a radical manner form the bases for relations between all, without discrimination, bias or exception from the principles of cooperation and legitimacy established by the international community.

458. It was from this standpoint that the resolutions of the Arab Summit on the process of reform, development and modernization in the Arab world emerged. The Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Tunis, 2004) issued several core documents representing the terms of reference for the process of reform, development and modernization namely:

- The Statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States;
- The Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity among Leaders of the Arab States;
- The Arab Charter on Human Rights.

The Statement on the Status Development and Modernization in the Arab States, announced at the Arab Summit in Tunis (2004) and affirmed by the Summit in Algiers (2005) has become an important document for defining the features of the future of the region and a basis for advancing the mechanisms to speed up the process of reform, development and modernization.

459. This approach of the Arab Summit has placed the vision of modernization and development within its proper framework. Despite containing a number of proposals for reform, initiatives coming from abroad have been flawed in several aspects of their strategic vision and their assumptions have been spoiled by external motives and interests. They were launched, first and foremost, as an expression of a security vision which holds that the push toward reform and democracy in the region is one of the most significant agents for the elimination of the roots of the terror reaching Europe and the United States from states defined in the West under the term, "Wider Middle East". There is no doubt that the confusion which has gripped the international community since the events of 1 September 2001 with all the repercussions thereof and the hold of the so-called war on terror over international priorities has driven a number of states active at international level to explore new policies and mechanisms to confront the dangers of what they call terrorism from abroad. This has been fed by extreme right-wing international forces, raising the tone of the campaign against the Arab and Islamic States.

460. These initiatives have promoted democracy and political plurality as the magic solution to all the problems of the region. While democracy in, indeed, a basic political necessity and a dynamic for development of the societies adopting it, reform must, at the same time, confront economic, social and political problems without being limited to ready-made prescriptions. Awareness of the depth of the problems, that there is no one magic solution and that the process of building and modernizing development and political structures is an ongoing, complicated and comprehensive process, is something that has to be acknowledged frankly by the Arabs, who must be clear about its dimensions and open up a dialogue.

461. While the Arab States have dealt wisely with these external calls and initiatives, the Summit has realised the importance of placing the issue of reform within a methodological framework that takes into fundamental account the interests of the Arab States and places the Arab citizen at the heart of its concerns. The Summit affirms that development and modernization are a priority that the Arab States are striving to deepen, widen and cooperate to achieve at national, Arab and international levels. The bases of this vision are as follows:

- Development and modernization are a pan-Arab issue arising from within the region and an expression of the assured and legitimate ambition of the Arab citizen for a better future. They are an end in themselves and not simply tools or mechanisms of the war on terror. Indeed, they are a practical philosophy that endeavours to serve the citizen, advance development and widen the bases of participation in various political, social and economic areas.

- Reform and development began some time ago and must continue; they are not a tactic or emergency response.

- This track deals with two sets of characteristics: the first of these is a regional, pan-Arab characteristic taking into account Arab culture and identity, which do not conflict with development and modernization. The second are national characteristics taking into account national identities, different stages of development, accomplishment and growth achieved by each country; these, too, do not conflict with progress and reform.

- The Summit saw fit to draw the attention of all parties to the organic relationship between reform and development on the one hand, and provision of security and stability on the other, and that achieving the sustainable development and real stability that provide the essential foundations for reform in the region require settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute on a lasting, comprehensive and just basis.
- The Summit affirmed that the Arab States are open to the world and interact with world events. Accordingly, they do not oppose dialogue with international forces to benefit from their experience in development and modernization. On the contrary, they welcome initiatives and approaches in support of their efforts. Within the framework of this vision, the Arab States were keen to accept dialogue with the Group of Eight (G8 countries) and establish bases for partnership in support of these ideas. The document on the Status of Development and Modernization affirmed this concept, when it stipulated cooperation with the international community in the framework of mutual partnership and on the basis of joint interests.

462. An extensive series of meetings and conferences on reform in the region have been held with international involvement. The documents and declarations of all these gatherings have affirmed that they see in the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States a genuine expression of the vision emanating from the region, designed to meet the needs of the Arab citizen, build his capacities and realize his aspirations for a better future. Various international bodies have considered this statement as the principal authority on which to build any real process of development and modernization in the region.

463. Accordingly, the G8 Summit meeting on 9 June 2004 (attended by a number of Arab States) issued a statement on the "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa" and welcomed the statement on development and modernization issued by the Tunis Summit. The G8 Summit affirmed that genuine reform cannot be imposed from the outside but must emanate from inside the region. It likewise affirmed that its support for the movement for reform in the region goes side by side with its continuing support for a lasting, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the common vision of the establishment of a viable, democratic and sovereign Palestinian State. The Summit announced the establishment of the Forum for the Future, as a central mechanism of the partnership process with the States of the Middle East and North Africa.

464. Although there are still question marks over the geographic framework of the partnership defined by the G8 Summit, which included other states as well as the Arab States in what it called the Wider Middle East, the Arab States have not tarried over this point lest it be used to accuse them of obstructing the dialogue and joint consultation, particularly as the G8 countries have adopted, together with a group of Arab States, a series of diverse programmes in support of reform and development efforts in various areas.

465. The Kingdom of Morocco hosted the first session of the Forum for the Future on 11 December 2004 in Rabat, in which I participated. A ministerial declaration was issued dealing with the political, economic and social dimensions of reform and affirming the continued support for a lasting, comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict with the aim of establishing a Palestinian State beside

Israel. The declaration also dealt with the important role played by organization of businessmen and civil society in support of the reform process and adopted a number of development and educational projects designed to raise the efficiency and level of different development sectors.

466. From 6 to 7 February 2005, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosted a conference at the Dead Sea to launch an initiative on "Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries". This initiative is designed to reform administrative, financial and judicial institutions in the Arab States with the aim of providing oversight and transparency for the Arab citizen, combating corruption and providing high-level quality. The initiative has a national dimension, to be implemented in each country, and a regional dimension represented by coordination, exchange of experience and integration of information through working along six axes, each one of which an Arab State shall assume responsibility for: civil service and integrity (Kingdom of Morocco), the role of the judiciary and law enforcement (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), e-government, administrative simplification and regulatory reform (United Arab Emirates), the role of civil society and the media in public sector reform (Lebanese Republic), the management of public finances (Arab Republic of Egypt) and public service delivery (Republic of Tunisia). The conference issued a statement welcoming the participation of the Arab League and its specialized agencies in the proceedings in achievement of the aims of the statement issued by the 16th Arab Summit (Tunis, 2004).

467. The Kingdom of Bahrain hosted the second session of the Forum for the Future from 11 to 12 November 2005 in Manama. I participated in this together with representatives from 36 countries, under the joint chairmanship of Bahrain and the United Kingdom. The axes of the forum revolved around four key issues namely, the role of women in economic and social development, human rights, transparency and the fight against corruption, and the rule of law.

468. Shortly before the forum, a "parallel meeting" was held in Manama within the framework of the dialogue between governments and non-governmental organizations. These organizations called upon governments in the region to establish a timetable for the reforms they intend to undertake.

469. The efforts of Arab Governments have not been limited to the axis of regional activity and initiatives and programmes proposed and adopted in these conferences. A number of Arab States have had varying degrees of success at national level in deepening democracy, widening participation, developing elections, human rights, empowerment of women and expanding the scope of freedoms. These achievements were carried out using a variety of measures, including development of the necessary laws and legislation, constitutional reforms, opening the door to civil society and the creation of various mechanisms to promote human rights. A number of states have likewise made tangible progress in development of the rights of women in the context of equality among citizens. Several states have set up ministries or national councils for human rights, while others have widened the powers and independence of civil society organizations and developed legislation in support of freedoms.

470. After the release of the Summit statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States, I believed it my duty to introduce it on the international arena, in support of the initiative of the Summit Presidency and all Arab States. I sent letters to the secretaries-general and heads of international and

regional organizations, explaining the substance of the statement and the text was lodged with the United Nations, the European Union, the Commission of the African Union, the Organization of American States and Association of Southeast Asian Nations. I continued to clarify the Arab viewpoint on the basis of this statement by contacts and meetings with a large number of international officials at all levels in many countries and by participation in forums on the process of reform, development and modernization as an expression of the philosophy and principles of Arab reform and development. We are looking forward to the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States having a library in which to collate the achievements of the Arab States so that progress reports might be submitted to the Arab Summit.

471. The League's effort has been directed to reinforcing the democratic trend in the Arab nation by reissuing information and circulating it to Member States, disseminating Arab and international public opinion and giving prominence and encouragement to current achievements in the Arab States. On this basis, I have been keen to request Member States to supply the Secretariat-General with the necessary information on the steps taken by each state to implement the declaration. I have received reports from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Djibouti, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Lebanese Republic, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Republic of Yemen. These reports do not represent all the achievements in the Arab region and there are other significant achievements we are monitoring in the Arab States that are fully in keeping with the accelerating pace of change and development in the region. By way of example only, the Arab Gulf States have taken a variety of measures toward developing and reforming political, social and economic life. The Kingdom of Bahrain and State of Qatar have begun a series of reforms to widen political participation, entrench freedom of expression and carry out constitutional reforms. Kuwait has held direct elections for the National Assembly with the participation of women for the first time. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has held municipal elections in a number of regions and announced it will hold elections in the remaining regions subsequently. The organization of legislative elections in the United Arab Emirates has been announced. A number of Arab States, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Yemen have announced a review of their legislation, in line with the new trends to consolidate the democratic method. In Egypt, significant constitutional changes have been announced to enable amendment to the constitution and multiple candidates for the Presidency of the Republic. A number of states have made wide-ranging changes in areas of human rights and updated their legislation in line with these changes, particularly in respect of women's rights. These states are the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Kuwait, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Morocco, among others. Syria has taken steps in the area of economic and financial reform, development programmes, the political climate and constitutional and legislative formulations. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has launched the national initiative for human development in Morocco. In Mauritania, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy intends to undertake reforms in the course of the transitional phase.

472. I participated in an important conference held in the Republic of Yemen entitled, "Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court". This conference issued the Sana'a Declaration, dealing with issues of democracy, human rights, the role of civil society and the rule of law in supporting and protecting these.

Participation of the League of Arab States in supervising elections and contributing to securing the democratic trend

473. Convinced that the democratic process has become a basic political necessity and a dynamic for the development of those societies that adopt it, the Secretariat-General of the Arab League has, in keeping with the prevailing trend in Arab countries that have dealt wisely with the external calls and initiatives that talk of the need for reform and democracy throughout the world, placed the issue of reform within a methodological framework that takes into primary account the interests of the Arab States and places the Arab citizen at the heart of its concerns. The Arab League considers that development and modernization are a priority the Arab States are striving to deepen, widen the bases of and cooperate constructively at national, Arab and international levels to achieve, on the basis that such development, modernization and political reform are a pan-Arab issue arising from within the region and express the legitimate ambition of the Arab citizen in his quest for a better future.

474. The Secretariat-General shares with Arab Governments the conviction that legislative and presidential elections in the Arab States be held at the specified times in genuine transparency to enable the Arab citizen to express his view freely and safely, without feeling afraid or obstructed, in such a way that all citizens become partners in building their political, economic and social system. This is what will achieve growth, development and modernity, to which end a number of Arab States have agreed to the Arab League playing a prominent role in supervising their presidential and legislative electoral processes.

475. In view of the reputation for honesty and professionalism the Arab League has acquired in this field, the Secretary-General has received a number of calls to participate in monitoring elections in friendly countries outside the Arab system, such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chechnya and Belarus. We summarize below the participation of the Secretariat-General in the monitoring of elections in a number of Arab and friendly countries:

- Algerian presidential elections, 8 April 2004: The Secretariat-General took part in a high-level mission covering all provinces of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. The view of all the international observers, in common with that of the Arab League mission, was that the electoral process was characterized by impartiality and transparency and was an honest expression of the Algerian people's choice, giving back to the Arab people respect for the credibility of the electoral process. It also increased the cumulative experience of the Arab League in this area, building institutional capabilities within it for assuming responsibility in a systematic manner for electoral monitoring in the Arab States at the request of any state.
- Legislative elections in the Union of the Comoros, 28 April 2004: The Secretariat-General participated in an electoral monitoring mission to the three islands. Its monitors played a prominent role in monitoring the

electoral process, praised by all the delegations from international organizations and leaving a good impression on Comorian public opinion.

- Tunisian presidential and legislative elections, 24 October 2004: The Secretariat-General participated in a high-level electoral monitoring mission of the presidential elections held in the Republic of Tunisia on 24 October 2004, alongside a number of international and local observers. From the time of its arrival, the delegation from the Secretariat-General held a number of meetings with all the parties and forces participating in the elections, which, for their part, expressed gratitude and appreciation to the League of Arab States for its participation in monitoring these elections. The delegation from the Secretariat-General took part in the monitoring in three provinces, as well as in the capital. The delegation's report stated that the elections were conducted in accordance with the relevant Tunisian laws and international standards and enabled the Tunisian citizen to express his opinion freely and transparently in a climate of orderliness and calm, devoid of any violations worth mentioning. These elections represent an important station on the path of consolidating the principles of democracy and political pluralism and enhancing the course of development, modernization and reform in the Arab nation.

- Presidential elections in the Republic of Djibouti, 3 to 10 April 2005: In response to a request from the Government of the Republic of Djibouti to monitor the presidential election process in the country, the Secretariat-General sent a delegation to participate in election monitoring. In the course of its mission, the delegation took part in a number of events and met with officials, both government and opposition, representing most of Djibouti's political currents. These elections were held at the appointed time among proceedings noted for calm and security in accordance with the laws regulating them. The observers made several comments on the conduct of the elections but these did not diminish their impartiality.

- Ethiopian legislative elections, 15 May 2005: In response to a request to the League of Arab States and to cement the historic ties binding the Arab and Ethiopian peoples, a mission from the Secretariat-General participated in monitoring the Ethiopian general elections held on 15 May 2005, together with international observer delegations from the European Union, the African Union, the United Nations, the Pan-African Parliament, the Carter Center, Algeria, a number of European States and the United States of America. The Secretariat-General circulated the mission's report on all phases of the electoral process to Member States.

- Chechen parliamentary elections, 27 November 2005: The head of the Arab League mission in Moscow was assigned to participate in monitoring the Chechen parliamentary elections, alongside approximately 1,000 foreign and local observers taking part in the process.

476. These efforts in the development and reform process were accompanied by the efforts of important Arab forces and elements. Civil society and business organizations were invited to participate in these efforts to highlight the persuasions and views of the citizen and the private sector. These organizations held numerous meetings in Alexandria, Beirut, Morocco, Qatar, the Emirates and elsewhere in parallel with summit meetings and meetings of the Forum for the Future, support

governmental meetings with their ideas to forge a special partnership aimed at the development of Arab societies. An important statement was released by the conference organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in collaboration with a number of civil society organizations from across the Arab world. This formulated an important vision of Arab political, social, economic and cultural reform issues and defined the mechanisms at the disposal of civil society organizations to support actively the reform efforts in the region. The Arab Reform Forum will organize the Second Arab Reform Conference with the theme, "Successful Models", at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

477. These successes on the path of development and modernization in the Arab world, despite their significance, ought not to give us a feeling of contentment or lead to a state of lethargy. The road is still long, the challenges numerous and the ambitions greater yet. The hopes of the Arab citizen for a promising future are attached to the continuity and speed of building upon achievements to date and in accelerating achievement in the coming years.

478. The Arab Summit in Tunis released its important statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States that has become the primary authority for all who seek to address issues of reform either inside or outside the Arab nation. This document represents a general framework and the broad outlines clarifying the bases and principles on which reform is to be based and affirms the important position of this issue on the agenda of the Arab region's priorities. In the final analysis, it is an expression by the Arab leaders of collective and joint responsibility in meeting the concerns of the Arab masses and the challenges confronting human development in all senses. It remains for the executive, legislative and judicial bodies to translate the approaches and concepts into pan-Arab plans and programmes, detailed national programmes and mechanisms for follow-up and evaluation.

479. As we have mentioned, the Arab States have addressed the international calls and initiatives wisely and opened channels for dialogue that have borne fruit in forums, programmes and projects for development and modernization. However, beside the above, what we are lacking today are Arab mechanisms to deal with the issues of development and modernization addressed by the Summit, to deepen and consolidate the dialogue and exchange of experience among Arab States – not only the dialogue with international bodies – and through these pan-Arab platforms and mechanisms, to establish interim goals and executive programmes giving expression to this vision.

480. Accordingly, the League of Arab States shall be concerned with the monitoring of implementation and the dialogue of Arab States with each other, civil society organizations and the private sector, as a purely Arab dialogue that enables reform and development to emanate from a comprehensive Arab strategy.

481. The Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States will undertake careful monitoring of the development and modernization currently underway in the Arab region and document this in annual, public reports. It shall thereby found a tradition of publishing Arab reports on reform and development that will become authoritative references for observers, interested parties and specialists, as a replacement for reports issued by foreign bodies on the situation in the Arab world that often lack accuracy and objectivity and are sometimes released for specific purposes incompatible with objectivity and scientific integrity.

Chapter 5: The elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the region

Regional security and international variables in the fields of arms control and disarmament

The international environment

482. We are living today in an international environment whose features are largely defined by two key events: the end of the cold war and 11 September 2001. These two events have created an international security environment characterized by a number of features, of which the most significant are the disappearance of several of the conventional threats prevalent during the old war and the emergence of new, non-traditional sources of menace. The ending of the balance that was a feature of the East-West conflict has changed the nature of armed conflict, transforming it from one between states and regular armies to conflicts of a different character. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States has become the sole leader of the world in a situation of globalization where boundaries have been reduced and intervention for the sake of interests is now a serious consideration, regardless of the extent to which this is compatible with the traditional precepts of international law. There is also an attempt to narrow the parameters of sovereignty, particularly in relation to so-called cross-border threats, such as terrorism and organized crime. In one way or another, human rights violations have been included in this!

483. All of this has resulted in the international community confronting a number of new concepts in international relations that are in the process of development and change, such as "the right of intervention" and "the responsibility to protect".

484. The events of 11 September 2001 have entirely reshaped the international situation, redefined the concepts of security and pushed the fight against terror to the top of the list of priorities. On this basis, the countries of the world are classified as "responsible" states, "irresponsible" or "rogue" states, or as "the axis of evil". Some states have sometimes given priority to security over certain of their citizens' basic freedoms, which scarcely existed before being flouted. Many international powers, principally the United States, have initiated systematic efforts to explore mechanisms and establish new theories to deal with the non-conventional threats they believe are facing them, establish these approaches and interests on the intellectual and planning level and draw up long-term strategies from which practical, applied policies and executive mechanisms are derived.

485. In the light of the efforts to rearrange the security environment and reorganize international relations to enable these variables to be dealt with promptly and effectively, several powers have sought to impose unilateral policies rather than bolster multilateral relations. The security environment has become a rapidly changing and confusing one, making it hard to predict what will happen. In this atmosphere, there are three main groups of international powers. The first of these is the United States, the leading power in the world. It possesses an awesome military machine, advanced technology, a powerful economy and security strategies that seek to impose unilateral policies and abort any attempts at competition. Its own military expenditure in recent years amounts to 47 percent of world expenditure on armaments; in other words, it alone spends almost as much as the rest of the world put together.

486. The second power is represented by the political, military and security entities and organizations of state groupings that allow them to play an international role, such as the European Union. In order to carry out this international role, these individual states have given up much of their own national sovereignty in favour of a single European defence and security policy allowing them to realize their joint aims in the international arena side by side with other great powers.

487. The third power are those emerging powers, such as China and India, whose international standing is expected to increase in the coming decades.

488. Finally, there are developing countries endeavouring, within regional groupings such as the African Union and the League of Arab States, to achieve a minimum degree of regional organization and coordination in the hope of preserving some of their interests but, however, without making concessions in the concepts of national sovereignty or national interest, regardless of the pettiness or selfishness of this notion. This divides their efforts, makes the chances for success weak and threatens their security.

The efforts of the Arab League

489. Over three successive years, I have presented to the Arab summits in Sharm El-Sheikh (2003), Tunis (2004) and Algiers (2005) reports containing assessments of the Arab efforts over thirty years to free the Middle East region from weapons of mass destruction, principally nuclear weapons. In these reports, I have reviewed the changes in the international arena and the security environment that have given rise to dangers and challenges I have believed it my duty to draw attention to.

490. The negative changes and developments occurring in the international environment can be summed up in three main axes:

- The deviation of the principal powers' international discourse from the original principles that formed the basis for the world's non-nuclear states acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly by using criteria that discriminate between states concerning the acquisition of such weapons or the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. This has highlighted the discriminatory policy of the series of regulations and provisions controlling the export of technology. Such policies result, at international level, in entrenching the presence of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and opening the door to a nuclear arms race.

- The second axis is represented by new security strategies based on policies of preventive and pre-emptive strikes to ensure security and that invoke the possibility of using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. These strategies and policies transgress, weaken and breach international treaties and give precedence to the use of force and the militarization of crises.

- The third axis is the attempt to promote de facto policies, principally the concept of granting the three nuclear States that have not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (India, Pakistan and Israel) nuclear legitimacy within the framework of the Treaty.

491. The period since the Algiers Summit has witnessed a number of developments that affirm the accuracy of our analysis. The most significant of these events are:

- The failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to produce any results. This is a natural consequence of the nuclear States' maintenance of their arsenals and refusal to negotiate on nuclear disarmament, which represents one of the three basic pillars on which the Treaty is based. The refusal of the United States and a number of Western nations to make reference to the results of the previous review conference lest they be held accountable by the measures adopted by the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the commitments of nuclear States to achieve genuine progress in disarmament and, likewise, the failure to make reference to the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review Conference of the Treaty and to Israel as the one state in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the Treaty.
- The rapprochement and nuclear cooperation between India and the United States, on the one hand and the attempts to prevent Iran from developing its peaceful nuclear programmes, on the other represent a demolition of the Treaty's second pillar, represented by the right of the Treaty's Member States to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, while denying non-Member States the same privilege.

Summary of Arab efforts during the last five years

492. There is no doubt, over the last five years, the Arab states have shown increasing concern with issues of regional and international security, arms control and disarmament in the international arena, given the obvious repercussions of these issues on the stability and security of the region, on the one hand, and the significant effect these issues have upon development and progress, on the other.

493. Within the framework of the League of Arab States, this concern has taken two clear directions. The first is the establishment and consolidation of a number of institutions, mechanisms and organizations to which the task of addressing issues of security and disarmament and the coordination of positions in respect thereof can be entrusted. This has been achieved within the framework of the restructuring of the League of Arab States and the review of the concepts accompanying this complicated process. Among their proposals for reform and development of Joint Arab Action, the Arab States submitted a number of ideas concerning security and stability, addressing issues of conflict prevention, management and resolution and endeavouring to activate the role of the League's institutions in preserving regional security and contributing to international security.

494. A pan-Arab mechanism for conflict prevention and management has likewise been agreed. The League's agencies and Member States are currently studying the creation of an Arab Security and Peace Council and an Arab Court of Justice. If put into practice, allowed to operate effectively and with the political will behind them, these mechanisms will all be significant factors in the developing concept of security in the Arab region.

495. The second parallel direction is the growing concern of the Arab League with security, stability, arms control and disarmament issues, the monitoring of developments in the international arena and defence of the Arab vision on these

issues, particularly in relation to weapons of mass destruction, within the framework of the Arab initiative to make the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction, as the optimum solution for the complications arising from the spread of such weapons and the optimum, integrated treatment of the issue of Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and possibility of their proliferation to others states.

496. In response to these trends, a department within the Secretariat-General was created with responsibility for international arms control and disarmament. Likewise, an integrated sector for Arab security, headed by an assistant secretary-general, was created to monitor and analyse Arab security issues and provide advice and proposals.

497. During the last few years, the Secretariat-General has been active on a number of levels and in various fields. This activity can be summarized as follows:

Unconventional weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction

- Following up and monitoring of security, legal and political issues at multilateral assemblies relating to weapons of mass destruction, specifically within the framework of the Security Council, the General Assembly (First Committee), the International Atomic Energy Association, the Geneva Disarmament Conference, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and meetings preparatory thereto, the annual conferences of the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization and others. In the majority of these assemblies, the Secretariat-general coordinates the Arab stance whenever possible. It likewise advises the Council of the League of Arab States at various levels of developments at these assemblies and of changes in international trends and how to address these.

- Continuing the work of the two committees formed by the Council of the League in the 1990s. The first committee of experts is responsible for drawing up a draft treaty to make the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction, principally nuclear weapons. This committee has made considerable progress in accomplishing its task and is close to completing its work. The second committee is responsible for monitoring Israeli nuclear activity in violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and for the last five years has continued to analyze international developments and put forward its proposals for Arab action at international assemblies concerned with weapons of mass destruction.

- Action at the highest levels to mobilize the Arab position vis-à-vis armaments issues that touch upon security in the region, including the issue of weapons' sales by European countries to Israel and the use of these in the occupied Arab territories in contravention of international conventions and European codes of conduct. The most recent of these issues was the discovery of documents on the United Kingdom's involvement in the secret sale of heavy water to Israel at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, which played an important part in Israel's successful development of its nuclear weapons programme.

- Monitoring of developments in the international arena in the areas of international disarmament and security, advising the Arab States of these and the extent of their impact on Arab security, and proposing ways of addressing these to preserve Arab interests. In this context, I presented an analysis of the international risks and how to confront them, together with an analysis of Arab efforts up to the Tunis (2004) and Algiers (2005) summits. I also sent a number of letters dealing with these developments to Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

- Establishing an ongoing dialogue with regional and international organizations and participating, with a number of research centres, in monitoring international trends, particularly with the European Union, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations agencies concerned with disarmament issues. Conferences and seminars were held to deepen understanding of these issues and explain Arab points of view.

Conventional weapons

- The League of Arab States has monitored the growing international concern with the issue of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and participated actively in directing negotiations in the international arena in the service of Arab interests without affecting other priorities in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The success of Arab efforts and the coordination of Arab positions resulted in the adoption of a United Nations Action Plan in 2001 in line with Arab interests.

- In view of Arab awareness of the dimensions and risks of the illicit trade in small arms, its destructive economic and social impact, particularly on women and children, and the resulting obstruction of the efforts to establish peace and move toward security and development in conflict zones, the League of Arab States has established a regional, pan-Arab point of contact within the Secretariat-General to coordinate the efforts of national contact points in Arab States. It also held two important conferences in 2003 and 2005 to discuss a variety of issues on the international arena and define joint Arab positions to enable their adoption at United Nations Review Conferences.

- To achieve this, the Secretariat-General is also coordinating with concerned international organizations to provide support and assistance in building the capacities of the Arab States and the Arab League, enabling them to deal effectively with the various dimensions and numerous and varied effects of the problem of the illicit trade in small arms.

Main conclusions

498. My aim in this review and accompanying analyses was to highlight the following important issues:

- The international security environment has changed dramatically and given rise to important security strategies and policies that we, as a regional bloc, must study and analyze the causes of. We must understand our position, as a regional bloc, within these strategies and policies and how to address them in a way that safeguards our regional security and strengthens our capabilities in the international security environment, which has come under attack from concepts of pre-emptive and preventive strikes, threats to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States and the categorization of states on the basis of subjective measurements and assessments into "responsible states", "irresponsible states" and "rogue states" or whatever division was made at the time.

- Arab efforts over the last thirty years have met with few success and many frustrations, making the security outcome grave. In their endeavour to achieve the goals of regional balance and of a region free from weapons of mass destruction, and having come under various pressures, the Arab States have committed themselves legally to frameworks of international non-proliferation treaties, while Israel alone has remained unrestrained by these treaties within the framework of international law and the international powers have connived to overlook completely the dangers of Israel's nuclear arsenal. This situation requires review and assessment on our part.
- In the light of the currently incomplete measures and uncoordinated positions, the Arab States are not qualified or able to deal with the new risks or confront the effects and consequences of this new environment.
- There is a need for a profound analysis of all the phenomena, policies and challenges of disarmament and the repercussions thereof on the region in order to come up with ways of dealing collectively with the new environment.

Chapter 6: Cultural issues and the dialogue of civilizations

Conference entitled, "The Dialogue of Civilizations: Exchange not Conflict" (Symposium of Arab Intellectuals)

499. Contemporary Arab culture and Islamic civilization face an unprecedented challenge brought about by an aggravation of regional and international problems and the slow pace of modernization at national and pan-Arab level. To confront this challenge, Arab thinkers and intellectuals must help to outline broad-based plans for practical and substantive programmes that show a way out of the crisis. It is not possible to surrender to the weight of pressure or slide into a relationship with the international order dictated by fear, hostility and confrontation. Rather, it is essential to commence a culture and civilization initiative embraced by the League of Arab States.

500. At this extremely sensitive and important time, I invited a group of Arab intellectuals and thinkers to attend a conference entitled, "The Dialogue of Civilizations: Exchange not Conflict" from 26 to 27 November 2001 at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General to discuss issues relating to the dialogue of civilizations, promote greater inclusiveness and tolerance in our contemporary world and affirm that the value of human civilization resides in its diversity and its richness is determined by its plurality.

501. This conference was designed as a contribution from the Arab League to deepening the orientation of Arab-Islamic civilization toward common human values and the strengthening of solidarity, in the context of existing dialogues to

increase the level of understanding between the peoples of different civilizations throughout the world.

502. During the profound intellectual discussions which followed, a number of important proposals and recommendations were made. They included some that are timely and require prompt implementation and others that need to be treated as long-term strategy, within the framework of the dialogue of civilizations between different nations and peoples, with attention to diversity and difference and respect for special characteristics.

503. By way of example only and without overlooking the importance and usefulness of the many proposals received by the Secretariat-General, agreement was reached on initiating action on the following measures:

(a) At international level:

- The creation of a League of Arab States annual prize to an intellectual or organization for outstanding intellectual contribution in the field of strengthening the dialogue of civilizations, re-establishing the Arab-Islamic discourse and promoting Arab-Islamic civilization;
- Welcoming the Secretary-General's endeavour to set up a commission in the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States to monitor the activity of Arab Diaspora communities; the creation by the Secretariat-General of a directory of expatriate Arab organizations and conducting a study of the situation of expatriate Arabs with a view to drawing up a plan to strengthen contact with such organizations; to assist, in collaboration with particular Arab States, the establishment of Arabic-language schools to teach Arabic language and culture to the children of émigré Arabs; and to establish legal monitoring posts, staffed by jurists and lawyers, to confront the racist assault against Arabs in foreign societies by taking legal measures in accordance with the laws of each country;
- To establish and fund chairs in Arab-Islamic civilization in universities and academic institutions across the world and to promote the exchange of lecturers and researchers between Arab and foreign universities and research institutes;
- To promote Arab contacts with the world through support for joint Arab and international cultural centres and international research centres that deal objectively with Arab issues; to expand the establishment of similar institutes and centres in major world capitals; to inaugurate joint symposiums; to organize travelling Arab cultural events and exhibitions in world capitals; to increase cooperation with satellite and electronic networks; and to call upon Arab Ministers of Information to activate their resolution to establish an English-language Arab satellite channel;
- To stimulate contacts with non-Arab Islamic countries in Africa and Asia, by holding regular joint symposiums to reach agreement on the form of an enlightened Islamic discourse that upholds religious foundations and displays Islamic tolerance and generosity and to cooperate in resisting the attempts to distort Islamic civilization;

- To encourage major international publishers to translate the masterpieces of Arabic literature and Arabic studies into other languages and to assist with distribution; to call upon Arab production companies to co-produce, with international production companies, television programmes and documentary films on Arab issues and Arab-Islamic civilization in foreign languages;
- To set up networks for Arab and foreign intellectuals and thinkers in foreign countries, coordinated by Arab League missions and councils of Arab ambassadors in various capitals and to seek to establish media monitoring posts in foreign capitals to address media attacks against Arab culture;
- To expand the use of the internet to promote Arab culture and Arab-Islamic civilization with a special multi-lingual web site;
- To call upon the League of Arab States to liaise with the United Nations and European Union and to cooperate with UNESCO, particularly the Arabia Plan, to develop Arab culture by incorporating programmes for the study of different cultures and civilizations in educational curricula with the goal of changing the concepts that lead to misunderstanding between civilizations, and to teach these in all countries at all educational levels;
- To encourage international non-governmental organizations to implement programmes and activities designed to strengthen understanding between peoples in support of the dialogue of civilizations.

(b) At Arab level:

- To call upon ALECSO to forge an agreement between the Arab States to prepare educational curricula, programmes and activities at all levels to introduce different cultures and civilizations with the goal of strengthening mutual understanding, awareness and understanding of the other;
- To invite governments to equip a generation of missionaries, competent in foreign languages and capable of making the call to true understanding of the religion of Islam, with its principles of tolerance and repudiation of fanaticism and extremism;
- To promote comparative studies of cultural issues and issues relating to the development of and interaction between civilizations; to provide educational grants and encourage cultural interchange, particularly between organizations and within the framework of higher education curricula;
- To call upon Arab Governments, civil society organizations and private institutions concerned with culture, education , dialogue and understanding between civilizations to collaborate with their international counterparts and to call upon Arab cultural industries to orient their productions toward strengthening an affinity with Arab identity and Arab-Islamic civilization and encouraging dialogue with other civilizations.

(c) Mechanisms for implementation:

- To establish a symposium to achieve the goals of the Arab civilization initiative, open to all contributions from Arab intellectuals and thinkers; to form a permanent commission for this symposium, under the supervision of the Secretary-General, charged by the symposium to make proposals and contribute to the institution of programmes to correct the misrepresentation of the Arabs and Arab culture, resist the campaign of distortion against Arab culture, make available the necessary databases and coordinate with relevant Arab, Islamic and international organizations; the conference participants welcomed the Secretary-General's appointment of a Commissioner for the Dialogue of Civilizations at the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States to act as rapporteur to the symposium and able to call upon the assistance of specialized Arab organizations and Arab and international organizations;
- To establish a fund to support the Arab cultural initiative, receiving donations and contributions from governments, organizations and individuals toward the cost of the symposium's programmes at Arab and international level, under the supervision of the Secretary-General;
- To call upon Arab States and civil society organizations to form pan-Arab committees concerned with intellectual dialogue and cultural renewal and contact;
- To strengthen cooperation with UNESCO, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the European Union and the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) to activate a dialogue on human civilization and establish joint programmes in this area, and to utilize for the resources of these organizations in implementing such programmes;
- The Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States shall be entrusted with making the necessary contacts with the relevant bodies to implement the action programme.

504. The conference issued the Declaration of the Symposium of Arab Intellectuals, stating:

- Terrorism is an international phenomenon from which all the Arab peoples suffered before the events of 11 September 2001 and is unacceptable regardless of its motives, justifications and causes. Arab societies reject extremism and fanaticism. On this basis, we condemn the outrages in New York and Washington that took the lives of innocent victims.
- Those assembled request governments and the Secretary-General to monitor carefully the issue of solidarity with Arab communities abroad and give support to their activities.
- The ideology of extremism, discourse of fanaticism and practice of violence are the result socio-economic problems and political and cultural decline accentuated by external interests and domestic factors and aggravated by persisted Israeli aggression, its rejection of a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and right of the Palestinian people to

establish an independent state, and its continued occupation of other occupied Arab lands in contravention of the resolutions of international legitimacy.

- We caution against confusing terrorism, which is repudiated internationally, with legitimate national resistance to occupation.
- The establishment of the social justice and economic growth we seek, the democratic values and institutions we strive to perfect, the fight against corruption in all its forms and the call for justice and democracy in international relations are all essential for social progress and the eradication of violence, as are the rejection, in accordance with international legitimacy, of interference in internal affairs and the desire to promote egality among the peoples of different cultures on the basis of human equality.
- It is essential to formulate policies to address social and cultural decline and Arab States are called upon to re-examine their educational programmes, promote scientific research and strengthen the links of educated Arab émigrés to their homelands to enable Arab energies to make an effective contribution to development and modernization.
- Attention should be given to the empowerment of woman and enhancement of her position in society, in recognition of her vital role in the enrichment of civilization; particular attention should be given to the proper nurturing of a generation that will reject violence and believe in the culture of dialogue.
- Arab governments and various cultural organizations across the Arab world are called upon to interact with the qualitative transformation afforded by the telecommunication and information revolution, making use of it to overcome the attacks directed at Arab culture and Islamic civilization, particularly given that this transformation affords multiple opportunities to present an objective picture of our efforts in modernization, enlightenment and progress, while working to deepen this and complete the Arab revival project.
- To entrench and universalize a culture of peace and justice that will prevent the occurrence of conflict requires the settlement of international and regional disputes, especially the Arab-Israeli dispute, in a just and even-handed manner in accordance with international legitimacy, and the establishment of a new international order based upon respect for human rights throughout the world, without discrimination or bias.
- Enlightened Arab culture must be given full and responsible consideration and the distortion of Islamic values, which support equality, justice and tolerance, rejected. Anti-social accusations of unbelief must also be rejected and respect for good neighbourliness, dialogue, the opinions of others and intellectual diversity affirmed. Arab research centres are called upon to play their part.
- Those assembled studied the current problematic relationship between Arab and Western civilizations and concluded their deliberations with the following:

- The need for both civilizations to acknowledge the other on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation and to recognize that co-existence is in the political and economic interests of both;
- The need to affirm that terrorism has no religion and no homeland, that both civilizations must cooperate to eradicate it and that investigation of its causes is a legitimate undertaking from the standpoint of affirming the need to achieve justice at international level;
- The need to bridge the gap of lack of understanding between the two civilizations and not to abandon the western arena for hostile organizations to continue to distort the picture of the Arabs and Islam;
- The need to affirm a just solution to the Palestinian issue on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy, given that Israeli policies represent one of the major causes of misunderstanding between the two civilizations; similarly, continuing the policy of double standards will lead to a widening of the gap and continued poisoning of the atmosphere;
- Affirmation that we, Muslim and Christian Arabs, support cooperation with all human societies for the good of them all and their future stability. We likewise affirm the need to study means of widening common ground, enhancing associations, reducing disparities and resolving disputes by peaceful means.

505. Appreciation was expressed for the initiative of the Secretariat-General of the Arab League in calling for this intellectual symposium. All concerned were called upon to back his efforts and offer the support necessary to implement the action programme issued by the symposium. The League of Arab States is the nursemaid of the Arab ideology that unites us in the face of escalating international challenges. Full support for the League and its political role in safeguarding Arab interests and implementing this programme was called for.

Arab participation in the Frankfurt International Book Fair, 2004

506. The Frankfurt International Book Fair is considered to be the most important international book and publishing fairs. It is also reckoned to be the best place for the dialogue of cultures, exchange of ideas and interaction of civilizations as, under its roof, publishers, writers and journalists from all corners of the world are gathered and it receives thousands of visitors.

507. Each year, the Fair chooses a focal theme and a series of fringe activities, cultural and technical events, designed to introduce the civilization and culture of the country or group of countries selected as the Fair's focal theme, is held.

508. Following the tragic events in the United States on 11 September 2001 and consequent escalation of the campaigns of inflammatory propaganda and distortion against Arab and Islamic culture and identity, the relevant Arab Ministerial Councils (Foreign Affairs, Culture, Information and the General Conference of ALECSO) agreed on Arab participation in the Fair and on the budget. Within this framework, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the League of Arab States and the management of the Frankfurt International Book Fair, under which the Arab

world would be an honoured guest and principal focal theme for the 2004 Fair (with effect from 5 October 2004 and for a period of one year).

509. In collaboration with ALECSO, as the cultural wing of Joint Arab Action, an executive programme was prepared for Arab participation in the 2004 the Frankfurt International Book Fair, to include cultural, technical and intellectual activities and events to highlight the pioneering role of Arab and Islamic culture in human civilization.

510. Within the framework of final preparations for the programme of Arab participation in the Fair, I held working sessions in Beirut with the Minister of Culture of the Lebanese Republic, attended by a group of Lebanese writers and intellectuals, and in Cairo with the Minister of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, attended by an elite group of Egyptian writers and intellectuals who were to participate in the events of the Fair. I also met with Mr. Volker Neumann, President of the Frankfurt International Book Fair, at the Secretariat-General on 11 September 2004, who praised the excellent preparation for the Arab participation in the Fair, the diversity of topics and activities and the wide-ranging participation of Arab writers and intellectuals. I also had contacts and meetings with a number of writers and intellectuals from the Syrian Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Tunisia, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Palestine, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Yemen, the Republic of Iraq, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Morocco.

511. I was anxious that the Arab representation should include writers and intellectuals from all Arab States without exception, including those states unable to take part, given my conviction of the significance of this major cultural event as an international opportunity to highlight the civilization and culture of the Arab world, past and present, and the extent of its contribution to the advancement and development of human thought and civilization.

512. I participated in the inauguration of the Frankfurt International Book Fair 2004-2005 alongside the former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder and a group of senior German officials, together with 18 Arab States, the Arab Publishers Union, the Biblioteca Alexandrina, L'Institut du Monde Arabe and 13 Ministers responsible for cultural affairs in the Arab world, as well as Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, wife of His Excellency Mohammed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

513. The great literary figure Najib Mahfouz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, the German Chancellor, the Mayor of Frankfurt and the President of the Frankfurt International Book Fair delivered speeches at the inaugural ceremony.

514. In his speech, delivered on his behalf by the journalist Mr. Mohammed Salmawi, the great man of letters Najib Mahfouz saluted Germany for choosing the Arab world as honoured guest of the current session for the first time in the Fair's history and said the Arab world possesses an ancient culture and civilization that has influenced Western civilization.

515. In his speech, which extended beyond cultural issues into the realm of politics, the German Chancellor, attending the inauguration of the Fair for the first time in its history, stated that the participation of the Arab world in the events of the Fair

would provide the opportunity for everyone to see the Arab world in a new and different form. He affirmed that the Frankfurt International Book Fair is considered to be the best place to come to know and understand other civilizations. The Western and Arab worlds, he said, are linked by a long and common history. No one can doubt or dispute the greatness of Islamic civilization, the signs, tolerance and influence of which are still to be seen in the great German cities. Many Muslim and non-Muslim Arab philosophers and scholars contributed to the advancement of all the sciences and gave humanity the keys to these. The initiative of having the Arab world as honoured guest of the Frankfurt International Book Fair is the best evidence of, a major step on and an effective contribution to the path of contact and the building of bridges of dialogue between the Arab and Western worlds. In his address, the Chancellor also dealt with the issues of Iraq and Palestine. He affirmed the need for all to recognise officially the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, work to achieve stability in Iraq and contribute to its rebuilding. He expressed satisfaction at the effective and important role of the League of Arab States in establishing a united Arab world.

516. In my address, I affirmed that the meeting of Arab and Islamic culture with Western culture at the Frankfurt International Book Fair takes place upon the path of contact and dialogue, not that of conflict or of clash. I added that we are meeting today to advance an enlightened project in the history of the engagement between East and West. I affirmed that the Arabs are confident a prominent European stance will contribute to the peace process until a Palestinian State is established on occupied land, and that we are likewise confident of the importance of Europe contributing to ending the critical situation in Iraq and achieving peace in the Middle East.

517. Following the inaugural speeches, I accompanied the German Chancellor and those present to the opening of the Arab world pavilion (with 12,000 books on display) and the pavilions of the Arab Publishers Union, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and L'Instut du Monde Arabe of Paris, as well as the exhibition of the Institute of Arabic-Islamic Sciences of the University of Frankfurt with the Islamic scholar Fuat Sezgin. In other spaces inside and outside the Fair exhibitions of photography, traditional Arab crafts, Arabic calligraphy, fine arts and the history of the Arab cinema were opened.

518. I took part with the German Minister of Foreign Affairs in several forums accompanying the events of the Frankfurt International Book Fair.

519. The Western and Arab media praised the joint Arab cultural participation in the events of the Frankfurt International Book Fair and some 4,000 published foreign language articles about the Arab participation are currently being translated; these will shortly be collected in one bound volume. A documentary white book is also being prepared on Arab press reports of the Arab world's participation in the Fair that will be published in due course.

520. Within the framework of strengthening cultural relations with the West and in appreciation of the role of the Institute of Arabic-Islamic Sciences of the University of Frankfurt in making known the service of Islamic civilization to Western civilization, I invited the Islamic scholar, Dr. Fuat Sezgin to deliver a lecture on the role of the Arabs and Muslims in the history of the human heritage, which he did before a large gathering of Arab intellectuals and thinkers on 16 January 2005 at the

headquarters of the Secretariat-General. Dr. Sezgin delivered another lecture to the University of Cairo on 17 January 2005.

521. The collective Arab cultural participation for the first time in the history of the League of Arab States affirmed that the Arab world has the potential and creative cultural and technical abilities to enable it to highlight the heritage of its civilization and its numerous and varied contributions to the building of civilization, as well as its ability to address and engage in dialogue with the other. In a five-day period (from 5 to 10 October 2004), the Arab world was able to establish a prominent cultural presence, achieve an unprecedented success and make culture serve the higher interests of the Arab nation. The Arab cultural programme in Germany shall continue until 2005. In this context, the League of Arab States has reached agreement in principle with five German organizations namely, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Hanns Seidel Stiftung, the Goethe Institute, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for the planning and financing of an Arab cultural programme to be implemented, once sources of funding have been made available from contributions from Arab States and civil society organizations, from March 2005 until the end of December 2005, in a number of major German cities namely, Leipzig, Munich, Stuttgart, Bonn and Hamburg. This comes within the framework of the ongoing, collective Arab cultural efforts to affirm the creative abilities and cultural heritage and richness of the Arab world. This collective action is running in parallel with the cultural cooperation between individual Arab States and Germany, coordinated by the League of Arab States with the aim of establishing contact, creating channels of communication with European culture and civilization and affirming that the culture and civilization of the Arab world is a culture of contact, communication and peace. On 23 November 2003, I signed a memorandum of understanding with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General. Mrs. Anke Fuchs, President of the board of directors of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, signed on behalf of the organization in Berlin. The memorandum of understanding is designed to advance cooperation between the two sides in matters of common interest, as represented by support for the dialogue between different civilizations and a strengthening the role of non-governmental and civil society organizations. The Arab world has, accordingly, profited from the success of Arab participation in the Frankfurt International Book Fair and the selection of the Arab book and Arab culture and civilization as honoured guest and focal theme of the 2004-2005 Fair.

522. Several agencies have been established to follow up cultural issues and the dialogue of civilizations, including:

- The Higher Arab Institute for Translation;
- The Language Treasury Project;
- The Intellectual Property Unit;
- Department of the Dialogue of Civilizations.

Establishment of the Arab Institute for Translation

523. At the present time, information represents a powerful element in the strength of nations and progress of peoples. Translation is one of the key channels for information, as well as being a bridge between nations for contact and interaction in the fields of culture and technological development. In this context, the 2002 Arab

Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme warned of the knowledge gap separating the Arab countries from the developed countries and the extent of the backwardness from which the Arabs suffer in the field of translation, where once they had been world pioneers. The report stated that not more than 330 books are translated annually in the Arab world, which is a trifling figure in comparison with other nations, equivalent to half the number of translations of a country such as Greece. The report also states that the cumulative total of books translated into Arabic since the age of the Caliph al-Mamoun until now does not exceed 100,000, which is the number translated in Spain in a single year.

524. The Higher Arab Institute for Translation was established in an endeavour to address this substantial deficit in translation. On 24 March 2003, the Council of the League at ministerial level adopted a resolution establishing the Higher Arab Institute for Translation after the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria announced it would provide facilities for the launch of the Institute in Algiers.

525. I participated in the first session of the Supreme Council of the Higher Arab Institute for Translation held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, where a number of topics were reviewed, including: the draft internal bylaws of the statutes of the Institute, the draft statutes for Institute staff, the draft financial and accounting system and the draft general organizational structure.

526. The second session of the Supreme Council of the Institute was held in Algiers, with the participation of several Arab officials concerned with the issue to consider the contents of the volumes to be translated in this phase, the terms of acceptance for study at the Institute and the training and qualification courses that the Institute will hold in the next phase to prepare Arab translators.

527. The Institute has organized the first academic year for the award of a Master's degree in translation and simultaneous interpreting and some 40 students from Arab countries have enrolled for study this year. We anticipate Member States will pay their contributions to the Institute's budget for the implementation of its ambitious programmes in professional development and translation.

The Language Treasury Project

528. The Language Treasury Project aims to establish an automated data bank on Arab cultural heritage and old Arabic texts, in addition to global scientific achievement in Arabic. The project has two aspects:

- The cultural aspect aims to collect all Arabic scientific, technical, historical and social texts, as well as teach the Arabic language through programmes appropriate to the age and level of learners;
- The linguistic aspect will establish a database of Arabic linguistic data, such as a dictionary of Arabic usage and foreign language equivalents.

529. The Language Treasury Project was put before the 121st ordinary session of the Council of the League, which adopted resolution 6399 (4 March 2004), stipulating in paragraph 2 to request the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, in collaboration with the Secretariat-General and ALECSO, to produce a full study on the project for presentation to the next session of the Council of the League. This was implemented.

530. Within this framework, the 122nd ordinary session of the Council the League of Arab States at ministerial level adopted resolution 6457 (14 September 2004), extending thanks to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for its initiative advancing the Language Treasury Project, welcoming its provision of the necessary support and facilities for the launch of the project, calling on Arab States to provide the necessary support together with making the cultural and scientific proposals necessary for its success and charging the Higher Commission for the Project, in collaboration with the Secretariat-General and ALECSO, to commence launch of the Project's work.

531. The Secretariat-General invited Member States to submit their candidates for membership of the Higher Commission for the Project and the 124th ordinary session of the Council of the League at ministerial level adopted a resolution on 8 September 2005, calling upon Member States that have not yet submitted their candidates for membership of the Higher Commission for the Project to provide the Secretariat-General with names in order to launch the work of the Project, which will be one of the principle pillars of ALECSO.

The Intellectual Property Unit

532. In affirmation of cooperation, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the League of Arab States and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on 16 July 2000, designed to bolster collaboration between the two parties in matters of common interest relating to the exchange and updating of information, the preparation and publication of studies, information and reference sources in Arab on various aspects of intellectual property, to encourage cooperation between Arab States at provincial and regional levels and to organize and convene joint conferences and forums relating to intellectual property.

533. The Intellectual Property Unit commenced work after the adoption of resolution 9071 (12 March 2001) by the 115th ordinary session of the Council of the League, which confirmed the Intellectual Property Unit within the administrative system of the Secretariat-General and subordinate to the Office of the Secretary-General. The memorandum of understanding contained a number of ideas received from Member States.

534. The Intellectual Property Unit held a coordinating meeting of Arab organizations subordinate to the League and having issues relating to intellectual property, such as ALECSO, the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), the Arab States Broadcasting Union and the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport. The first coordinating meeting of the aforementioned Arab organizations was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 5 December 2001 and one of its most important recommendations was that the Intellectual Property Unit be responsible for coordinating intellectual property activities within the Joint Arab Action system.

535. The reaction and response to the Intellectual Property Unit from federations and organizations concerned with intellectual property should be pointed out here. A number of letters were received in this regard, including from the Arab Publishers Union, requesting cooperation with the Unit, the Arab Lawyers Union and the Union of Arab Artists.

536. The Intellectual Property Unit commenced its preparations at rapid pace, resulting in the creation of a Unit web site linked to that of the Secretariat-General of the League. This site represents significant cooperation with WIPO, which financed its implementation.

537. In implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States and WIPO, the Intellectual Property Unit, in collaboration with WIPO and the Ministry of the Economy and Commerce in the State of Qatar, held the first joint coordinating meeting of directors of Intellectual Property Offices in the Arab States in Doha from 7 to 9 October 2002. The most important recommendations of the meeting were that the League of Arab States, in coordination with the Arab Office for Development Cooperation of WIPO, endeavour to put in place a mechanism to establish continuity of meetings on an annual basis to evaluate trials and monitor the results of recommendations. The assembly also recommended that the Intellectual Property Unit collate reports submitted to the meeting in a single volume for circulation to the competent bodies, public educational organizations and research centres in the Arab world.

538. The second joint coordinating meeting of directors of Intellectual Property Offices in the Arab States was held in Muscat in the Sultanate of Oman from 10 to 17 September 2003, with the participation of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Sultanate of Oman. The third joint coordinating meeting was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States in Cairo in collaboration with WIPO and with the participation of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt from 23 to 25 January 2006. At this meeting, the assembly welcomed the admission to WIPO as observer of the State of Palestine and expressed hope for its admission as full member in the near future.

539. The most important recommendations were:

- To urge Arab States to request WIPO to put in place national intellectual property strategies and produce studies on the economic dimension of intellectual property and its impact on the economies of the Arab States;
- The importance of creating means of ensuring the development of national intellectual property offices and of increasing collaboration between WIPO and the League of Arab States;
- The need to exchange information and cooperate in combating piracy with the efforts and role of national intellectual property offices to protect the investments and national economy of all states through direct coordination between offices, as well as the need to collect data and statistics for presentation to the next meeting;
- The assembly affirmed the importance that Arab States study the draft Treaty on the Protection of Broadcasting Organizations, expected to be ratified at the Diplomatic Conference in mid-2007;
- To call upon those Arab States which have not yet expressed an opinion to study the proposal of the Kingdom of Bahrain to WIPO regarding the development agenda and to express their view to WIPO before the meeting of the development committee. Consultations with the African group should

continue in order to bring about a convergence of proposals and produce with a single document;

- The assembly affirmed the need to participate in the sessions of the General Assembly of WIPO as an Arab regional group, in implementation of the resolution adopted by the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Geneva after the 2004 session of the General Assembly of WIPO;
- Given the desire of the League of Arab States to participate actively and effectively in all international and regional meetings and conferences to which it is invited to discuss issues of intellectual property and ways of strengthening international and regional cooperation, the Intellectual Property Unit took part in a number of important forums and conferences in various Arab States and at WIPO in Geneva;
- Five years after the establishment of the Intellectual Property Unit, the result affirms that the Arab States have made considerable efforts in the area of intellectual property, particularly within the framework of fulfillment by Arab Member States of WTO of their obligations under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). In recent times, global concern with intellectual property issues has been increasing and addressing these effectively and competently will influence the course of all aspects of development.

Establishment of a Department for the Dialogue of Civilizations and appointment of a Commissioner for the Dialogue of Civilizations

540. Notwithstanding the modest sums allocated in the budget of the Secretariat-General to this purpose, the League of Arab States has affirmed its participation in symposiums and forums organized to discuss the issue of the dialogue of civilizations at international level and has contributed through the work of Dr. Kamal Aboulmagd, Commissioner for the Dialogue of Civilizations, and that of the Secretary-General personally and his assistants.

541. The Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States acted diligently and promptly within the context of efforts to correct the errors and false definitions of the words "Arab" and "anti-Semite" appearing in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and its missions in overseas capitals were active in this regard. Along with Arab-American organizations and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the League's mission in Washington undertook campaigns in which it invited those concerned with the issue to contact Merriam-Webster Inc. and protest the dictionary's inclusion of a racist definition that misrepresents Arabs. This campaign resulted in the withdrawal of the incorrect definition of the word "Arab" from the electronic version of the dictionary available on the internet. The Secretariat-General issued a press statement on the matter and Merriam-Webster's action is in itself tantamount to an admission of the offence given to Arabs.

The challenges facing Arab and Muslim culture

542. It will be clear from the above that there are challenges facing Arab and Islamic culture and that the Arab world, in general, is living in a state of withdrawal and self-absorption. Arab security has been violated in more than one area and there are crises and tensions that have risen to the level of foreign or internal war. The

failure of the Arab world to keep pace with global scientific and cultural activity has become noticeable. It is enough to read the Arab Human Development Reports or make a comparison with any bloc or group of countries in the world, big or small, to confirm the depth and dimensions of the crisis and the levels to which this great nation, that for many centuries led the world, has sunk.

543. Aside from questioning the truth in regard to the strategies (or conspiracies) targeting Islam and the Arab identity, designed to fragment and create constructive (more correctly, destructive) chaos in the Arab and Islamic worlds, we see that there are a number of frameworks for dialogue between the Arabs and the West or between Islam and the West attempting to give expression to themselves through conferences, forums and meetings held here and there by research centres, academic institutions and official and private bodies. The assault upon the Arabs and Muslims remains, however, a European – and indeed, a general international – phenomenon, the degree of which varies from one country to another. It touches not only émigré Arabs but also the entire system of relations with the peoples of the Arab world. This ordeal represents a challenge to the call for dialogue, cooperation, mutual understanding and alliance between civilizations and cultures, the positive results of which are still to be felt.

544. However, a number of initiatives have been launched and international and regional bodies and organizations have issued statements and declarations. For example, the follow-up summit to the United Nations' 2000 Millennium Summit stressed the recognition by the countries of the world of the contribution of cultures and civilizations to the enrichment of humanity and the commitment to promoting prosperity, freedom and progress everywhere and to encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation between different cultures, civilizations and peoples. Yet in reality we see acts that blatantly contradict these noble, declared principles, from continued foreign occupation to the excessive use of force or threat of such, in addition to growing religious extremism, blind fanaticism and lack of respect for sacred symbols, such as occurred recently with the cartoons published in a Danish newspaper insulting the noble Arab Prophet, Muhammad.

545. The text of the Mecca Declaration and the Ten-Year Programme of Action adopted by the Islamic Summit Conference in December 2005 included affirmation of the importance of making optimum use of available human, natural and economic resources in the Islamic world, capacity-building, combating poverty and unemployment, eradicating illiteracy, eliminating disease, adopting clear measures for scientific and technological development, reducing the digital gap between countries and achieving the desired advance of civilization.

The deep Arab malaise is waiting for just such a cure

546. The rich Arab States have a responsibility to steer a course to reverse the downward path that is leading the Arab bloc toward degeneration. In this regard, we note the resolution adopted recently by the European Union to adopt a budget for the next seven years of EUR 1,000 billion to cover common political and agricultural expenditure, essential infrastructure projects, foreign policy and security. Without a similar effort of will, regardless of the amount involved, talk about Arab solidarity and cohesion will remain simply lines in the sand.

547. Discussion of the Arab reality, particularly the portrayal of Arab-Islamic culture, inevitably leads us to consider the origin of the portrayal and, in

consequence, our collective responsibility at official and popular levels to achieve better conditions for individual self-development through science and better education, as well as achieving means of reform and socio-economic change to guarantee some of the conditions for justice and a better life for all citizens. These are basic conditions for the maintenance of pan-Arab security in its widest sense and open-minded cultural uniqueness, both of which are liable to crack due to both internal and external causes.

548. The crisis created recently by the publication in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* of cartoons unbecoming of our Prophet Muhammad provided evidence of certain aspects of the attack against Arabs and Muslims and contempt for their sacred symbols, demanding prompt action by the Muslim community in Denmark, several Arab and Islamic bodies and the League of Arab States. Incidents like this highlight the importance of promoting cooperation between international bodies, particularly the United Nations, the European Union, the European Commission, UNESCO, ISESCO, ALECSO and others to monitor the issue of correcting the portrayal of Arab-Islamic culture in school textbooks in European countries. A conference to address this issue was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States on December 2004, in which the Secretariat-General contributed to the efforts to speed up implementation of its recommendations as quickly as possible. The Secretariat-General welcomes the efforts of Arab experts and official and private bodies to monitor the representation of Arab-Islamic culture in various countries of the world and will itself make a substantial contribution in this respect, particularly given that the dialogue of civilizations and rapprochement between cultures and civilizations is a fundamental aspect of relations between the Arab world and international blocs, such as the South American and Arab Countries Summit, the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Arab-American Dialogue, the Arab-Japanese Dialogue Forum, the Arab-Indian Forum, the Arab-Russian Dialogue, etc.

549. Studies and research show the difficulty of treating historical issues in school textbooks. For example, despite the efforts of the last fifty years, Germany and France have not reached a unified reading of their history of antagonism, burdened by tragedy and war. The official view of the European nations toward the colonial period still ignores their oppression and cruelty and plunder of the resources of other peoples. A good indicator of this is the recent protest by a number of French historians and history teachers against the official position. Several errors and flaws in foreign textbooks affecting Arabs and Muslims have been corrected both as part of the normal development from one decade to another and by virtue of the efforts by Arab and Muslim communities, researchers and teachers. However, there are still a number of substantial errors relating to various Islamic concepts such as jihad, which is presented as a holy war to spread Islam by force.

550. We are convinced that it is not possible to conceive of the desired renaissance of the Arab world or to shake off the painful Arab reality without an intellectual awakening – indeed, a lasting intellectual revolution – in the formation and nurturing of which sensible men of religion and of the world participate, with the goal of gathering together the currently fragmented Arab cultural scene and creating positive points of focus to confront urgently the Arab cultural crisis, limit its damaging repercussions and help to steer a course for future generations with a solid grounding in knowledge. We must note here the tremendous responsibility placed upon the shoulders of Arab men of religion to unite to confront the religious strife

and sectarian divisions that have threatened and are threatening more than one part of the Arab world.

551. The Synod of the Catholic Patriarchs of the Eastern Churches, held recently in Amman, called for greater rapprochement between Muslims and Christians, more awareness among students and their training in a better understanding of the other religion. If this praiseworthy effort is required in Arab society, which has witnessed many centuries of coexistence, greater efforts must be made and much thought given to the nature of Arab-Islamic relations with Western societies, nominally Christian but in fact secular or materialist in many respects, and with other, non-religious societies.

The great monotheistic religious emerged from the East. Perhaps we shall be inviting further sorrows if we are not able, as our forefathers were able, to invent developed forms of civilization to guide us instead of turning into mere consumers of dominant civilizations that attack and divide us and threaten our very existence.

552. The achievement of a comprehensive renaissance of civilization is dependent on new conditions. These include increased budgets for education and culture and doubled allocations for scientific research, as well as strengthening creative intellectual and artistic output and encouraging public and private sector organizations, symposiums and platforms for effective intellectual and religious dialogue.

Chapter 7: Strengthening ties with expatriate Arabs

First US-Arab Economic Forum, Detroit, Michigan (2003)

553. Given the important role of expatriate Arabs in the countries of the Diaspora in serving Arab causes and the need for them to connect with their homeland in order to bolster aspects of cooperation and understanding between the Arab world and the countries in which they reside, the Secretariat-General initiated construction of a database to include all associations, organizations and federations of expatriate Arabs in the Diaspora in order to have basic data and information about the circumstances of expatriate Arabs throughout the world, in terms of the organizations that frame their activities, their locations in their new societies, and to identify their leaders.

554. To give concrete form to the strengthening of ties with expatriate Arabs, the First US-Arab Economic Forum was held in Detroit, Michigan, in the last week of September 2003, with extensive Arab-American participation and amidst many expectations and hopes for movement toward a general improvement in the climate of US-Arab relations.

555. The Forum crowned more than one and a half years of intensive efforts and liaison by the Secretariat-General of the Arab League, Arab-American organizations and a number of Arab capitals to bring about the success of the Forum, which received collective Arab support, including that of the ordinary session of the Council of the League at ministerial level, which adopted resolution 6344 (9 September 2003) expressing collective affirmation of this unprecedented step.

556. The First US-Arab Economic Forum coincided with tension in a number of aspects of US-Arab relations that in many cases appeared ready to escalate, given the grave developments, particularly in relation to Iraq and Palestine.

557. The First US-Arab Economic Forum was held in parallel with the urgent efforts of a number of Arab countries to address, through diplomatic and media channels, the considerable damage done to the way they are portrayed and, in some cases, to their interests, in the United States.

558. Alongside this, the First US-Arab Economic Forum was held at a time when organizations and associations of Americans of Arab origin were actively promoting their interests, particularly in the light of the difficulties faced since the events of 11 September. The Forum was held a few days after the second anniversary of those distressing events, which opened the door to many difficulties and challenges in US-Arab relations and to vicious media campaigns targeting the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims that had a negative impact on Americans of Arab origin.

559. The Forum was held under the theme, "One world, two cultures, unlimited opportunities" and the sessions witnessed serious and profound discussions bearing on three principal axes: economic opportunities, human development, and information and communication technology.

560. In my opening address to the Forum, I affirmed that the principal purpose in holding the First US-Arab Economic Forum was to initiate a positive phase of US-Arab dialogue on a new and firm basis, by the creation of joint interests that will be clear to American public opinion and that only by dialogue can Arabs and Americans come to know "the other", through mutual understanding, the creation of new conceptions and a widening of the sphere of partnership within the framework of openness to objective criticism.

561. There was extensive, high-level official Arab participation in the Forum and a number of senior Arab officials took part.

562. The inaugural address was delivered on the Arab side by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bahrain, whose country held the Presidency of the Arab Summit at the time and which was relayed to the Forum via satellite as national commitments and responsibilities prevented the His Highness from coming to Detroit.

563. Beside the extensive participation of Arab businessmen from all Arab States, Arab women also played an important part by participating in the meetings of the Forum. The Council of Arab Businesswomen attended, together with a number of women's groups from the Arab world.

564. The Forum also witnessed high-level American representation. Mr. Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State, Mr. Spencer Abraham, the Secretary of Energy (himself an American of Arab origin) and a number of US Administration officials involved with the Middle East took part.

565. Outside officialdom, the Forum witnessed high-level corporate and business representation. In sessions, seminars and meetings extending over three days, the chief executives of a number of the world's largest technology companies took part, including Intel and Hewlett-Packard, as well as the large US car manufacturers, such as Ford, Chrysler and General Motors and other giant corporations, such as Boeing.

566. A number of academics, intellectuals and journalists interested in US-Arab relations and ways of developing these also participated.

567. Participants in the Forum discussed and analysed a large number of the issues on the agenda of US-Arab relations in the present situation. Among the most prominent examples was the extremely important speech given by His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was followed by a lengthy and deep discussion of the current and future state of US-Arab relations and the manner of dealing with these.

568. The discussions also addressed a number of issues of great importance to the Arab side, particularly a clarification of the economic reform and developments efforts designed to attract greater investment and raise levels of growth. The discussions, both general and fringe, also provided the opportunity for the Arab side to express its point of view on a number of controversial issues in the US arena, particularly in relation to the role of women in Arab societies.

569. The discussions affirmed a number of important points, of which the following are the most significant:

- There is a great need to explain the considerable benefits and returns from US-Arab relations to both US and Arab public opinion, since these relations have great advantages for both sides. In addition, numerous horizons and opportunities have still not been exploited, particularly in the fields of US-Arab economic and technological cooperation.

- There is a clear need to try not to diminish the possibilities of extensive US-Arab economic and technological cooperation against the background of the political difficulties affecting Washington's relations with a number of Arab capitals, given that both the Arab and US sides are anxious to develop such relations and advance them onto a wider plane of agreement and convergence, to mutual advantage.

- The Arab side affirmed the need for the US to show greater flexibility in relation to the frameworks of economic cooperation at the same time as the US is stressing the need for the Arab side to adopt further economic and political reforms to facilitate opportunities for joint cooperation.

- There are also wide areas and open horizons for cultural cooperation between the US and Arab sides, particularly at the popular level. A number of participants pointed to the need for the American people to know more about the Arab peoples, away from the stereotypes peddled by certain Western media circles, although this will require considerable effort from the Arab side. In return, the discussions made clear the need for the Arab peoples to have a greater and deeper knowledge of the ways and means of shaping and influencing American public opinion and of the rich and diverse culture of the American people. The discussions and contributions made clear a considerable eagerness for US-Arab cooperation in this respect.

- The great interest of non-governmental organizations of Americans of Arab origin in this area should be noted, particularly in the light of the construction by the Arab Community Centre for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) of the Arab American National Museum in Detroit, the first museum of its kind in the United States, which has 15,000 museums documenting numerous cultures but not that of the Arabs.

- It should also be noted that participants made a number of proposals, which will be collated by the Secretariat-General of the Arab League, in collaboration with the Arab-American organizations that participated in sponsoring the Forum. There were a number of frameworks that the Forum might adopt to develop relations further, including the following proposals:
    - The creation in the United States of an Arab-American think-tank concerned with addressing and investigating various aspects of US-Arab relations;
    - The establishment of a US-Arab forum for cooperation in the area of information technology, with the aim of bridging the digital gap by drawing up a specific action plan with clear aims, focusing on how the poor can benefit from information technology;
    - Increased US-Arab cooperation in areas relating to women by creating a joint body concerned with women's issues;
    - The establishment of committees for US-Arab cultural cooperation, responsible for holding exhibitions and cultural activities designed to exchange awareness of Arab and American cultures.

570. The Forum provided a far-reaching opportunity for a coming together and meeting, whether among businessmen or intellectuals, between civil society organizations or at the official level, in a friendly atmosphere far from the bustle that frequently characterizes ordinary political meetings. Alongside the general discussions, the Forum hosted a number of bilateral meetings between officials and businessmen from both sides and with each other. Several stated that these had indeed opened the way for future economic dealings.

571. The First US-Arab Economic Forum represented a serious and promising start that may contribute to the implementation of several items on the agenda for updating and developing the work of the League of Arab States, including issues relating to émigré Arabs, the dialogue of civilizations and civil society. The Forum addressed a number of aspects of these, in addition to dealing with US-Arab relations, focusing on the economic, social and cultural aspects.

572. The Forum also represented an excellent opportunity for and first step toward the practical implementation of US-Arab dialogue and the development of US-Arab relations on a proper course at both official and civil society levels. This necessarily implies that such an initial step has to be followed by others on the part of all parties concerned, in collaboration with Arab-American communities and within the framework of the positive partnership established between the League of Arab States and organizations of Americans of Arab origin.

573. A number of participants indicated that the Forum was the right move at the right time, opening the door to serious dialogue between the Arab and American sides. It is worth noting here that, at the same time as the Arab side was striving to distance the Forum from the political issues in the background, the American side, at the highest level, was keen to seize the opportunity presented by this great gathering of Arabs, Americans and Americans of Arab origin to defend several aspects of its foreign policy, particularly in relation to the Palestinian issue and developments in Iraq. These are issues over which the difference of Arab and American opinion is well known and obvious.

574. The Forum offered a suitable platform for participating Arab States to demonstrate their efforts at reform and development and attracting investment to US participants, whether Administration officials or from the private sector, as well as to journalists and the media. It is very significant to note here that the Arab presentation was, in many cases, not devoid of objective self-criticism.

575. In the form in which it was held and the level of participation it received, the Forum contributed to bolstering the position of the Arab-American community and organizations. This may be a significant point in relation to the role of the community and its organizations, particularly given that the Forum was held at the start of campaigning for the US presidential primaries.

576. The Forum offered an opportunity to present the Arab point of view in several US media, despite a lack of interest from the American press and media and their failure to give adequate space to the Forum and the views and ideas presented.

577. The discussions and views presented in the course of the Forum, particularly from the American side, confirmed the difficulty and urgency of the task of Arab organizations of correcting the distorted representation of Arab culture and Islamic civilization, presenting modern notions of the present and future Arab situation and obtaining access to Western media. It should also be noted that official and unofficial bodies involved with cultural affairs in the Arab world have a responsibility to take advantage of the positive climate produced by the Forum to grasp the importance of US-Arab cultural contact.

578. The First US-Arab Economic Forum revealed several negative aspects that must be removed. Agreement was reached on establishing the American Middle-East Economic Affairs Committee (AMEAC) to monitor implementation of proposals made to the first session of the Forum and prepare for convening subsequent sessions, in coordination with the Secretariat-General.

The holding of the First US-Arab Economic Forum demonstrated the possibilities for the success that can be achieved by Joint Arab Action, when goals are united, intentions are clear, the will is sincere and obligations are met.

579. In the light of the success of the First US-Arab Economic Forum, it was agreed to convene the second session in Houston, Texas from 26 to 28 June 2006. The 125th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level approved the new date on 4 March 2006 and charged the Secretariat-General with taking the measures necessary for the success of the Forum, in collaboration with AMEAC.

Chapter 8: The relations of the Arab world with regional and international entities and blocs

580. Given our awareness of the importance of an Arab political presence in the international arena, the strengthening of cooperation with the various active players in the world and presentation of an Arab message to the outside world as part of a united and harmonized Arab position addressing various issues in consolidation of the Arab stance, and in affirmation of the credibility of the joint Arab political line, particularly at a time when our beliefs, identity and culture are exposed to a campaign of distortion that needs to be addressed in a consistent and civilized manner, particularly given that there are a number of non-Arab States, chiefly those in geographic proximity to the Arab nation, that have expressed a wish to draw

closer to the League of Arab States, and in affirmation of our desire to reinforce cooperation and consultation with these countries, we have endeavoured to strengthen contact and consultations with regional and international entities and organizations, including:

Afro-Arab relations

581. The fact that more than two-thirds of the Arab people belong to the African continent, half of the Member States of the League of Arab States are Member States of the African Union and one-fifth of the States of the African Union are members of the League of Arab States has a rightful part to play in the formation of joint positions. This is an issue that requires development and encouragement in line with the new and emerging political circumstances in order to shape a better future for both the Arab and African spaces, which are, by their natures, complementary. However, this shall only come about as the mechanisms of Afro-Arab cooperation develop into a true Afro-Arab partnership based on the maintenance of joint interests and enhancement of mutual advantage.

582. The development of Afro-Arab cooperation and bolstering of Afro-Arab relations require the removal of obstacles in their path, a re-examination of Afro-Arab cooperation and planning for the transition to a stage of genuine cooperation and mutual benefit, based upon the convergence of economic, commercial, political and cultural interests – a cooperation that lays the foundations for the maintenance and development of Afro-Arab relations and strengthens solidarity, as a safety valve for the Arab and African peoples and bulwark for Arab and African security. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- The new international situation holds wide-ranging challenges for the possibility of developing Afro-Arab relations. The transformation in the structure of the international order since the end of the cold war and changes in both Arab and African conditions have made it necessary to re-examine the traditional bases governing these relations and the opportunities or obstacles these changes may present in order to re-establish Afro-Arab relations upon realistic foundations based upon mutually agreed strategic interests, in such a way as to ensure their future stability and development.
- The Arab and African nations generally form a common front against unfavourable trends in international relations as well as in the area of international trade and the area of high technology whose transfer is prohibited to developing countries. Adequate flows of capital are diminishing to African countries, including Arab States. There is, indeed, a convergence between Arab and African interests and both parties must strive to reach coordinated strategies to serve the joint interests of the Arab and African peoples.
- As a reaction to the phenomenon of globalization and its repercussions on developing countries, there has been a noticeable tendency across Africa and the Arab world toward the formation of regional and sub-regional economic and political blocs. Africa has seen the emergence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and others. This was

subsequently crowned by the establishment of the African Union and adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Similar Arab groupings have been established and a large number of bilateral Arab agreements have been signed. The Greater Arab Free Trade Area was completed at the start of this year and customs duties between its members liberalized. There have been noticeable Arab efforts on the political level, beginning with the ruling to hold Arab Summit conferences on an annual basis, the restructuring of the League of Arab States and the development of the Joint Arab Action system. These developments on the Arab and African levels are designed to enhance the performance of the Arab and African systems, eliminate duplication of activity and ensure implementation of the resolutions of their various councils.

- The position of the African States in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights in their homeland and on their own land is evident and has an honourable record at international gatherings. Given that human rights and basic freedoms are indivisible and an inalienable right, the coming together of the Arab and African peoples in support of issues of liberation and resistance to occupation and racial discrimination is a shining example of cooperation in modern human history. At a time when the liberation of all of Africa has been achieved with the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the Arab region is passing through a grave phase in the struggle of the Palestinian people to liberate their homeland and determine their destiny.

583. Experience in the political arena shows that the results of the activity of joint Afro-Arab cooperation organizations does not meet the common ambitions of Arab and African peoples. The stalling of their work, particularly that of the Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation, which represents the axis of cooperation, may be attributable to recent developments and altered regional and international political conditions, as well as to certain organizational matters, including the large membership on both the Arab and African sides and the clear lack of a means of implementing and applying recommendations, either because of the absence of an effective mechanism or the lack of political will. The work of these organizations must be rationalized in terms of operational mechanisms, size of membership and timing of meetings.

584. The expansion and framing of the fields and organizations of Afro-Arab cooperation require the involvement and incorporation of civil and non-governmental organizations in joint action. This requires the creation of joint Afro-Arab groups and associations in all areas of civil society activity and an emphasis on the rationalization of the pluralistic bases of democratic organizations.

585. There is a need for the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to agree upon a specific mechanism, subsequent to the adoption by the Arab and African Summits of resolutions enabling rationalization of the said organizations by the Arab and African Summits separately, in the event that it is not possible to convene a joint Afro-Arab Summit. Additionally, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and Chairperson of the African Union Commission must have wider scope for taking constructive initiatives outside the conventional frameworks to activate Afro-Arab cooperation,

programmes and activities and, also, address with prudence and flexibility the problems that prevent the cooperative organizations from meeting and re-engaging.

586. We note that the tenth session of the Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation (Kuwait, June 1989) recommended approval of a Kuwaiti proposal for the establishment of an Afro-Arab organization for finance and investment. The recommendation was approved by the Council of the League of Arab States and the Council of Ministers of the former Organization of African Unity. The Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation requested both the Arab and African sides to expedite the establishment of this financial organization, which could provide an excellent framework for economic and investment activity in both groups of states. However, this recommendation has not been implemented.

587. At the eighth session of the Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation, the idea of developing trade and commerce between the Arab and African States was discussed and the ninth session of the Standing Commission recommended the need to present specific proposals on the creation of an Afro-Arab preferential trading area. The tenth session of the Standing Commission discussed a draft framework agreement for the creation of an Afro-Arab preferential trading area and recommended the matter be referred to a committee of experts for study. This committee, which included two members from each of Arab and African sides, met in Abidjan in July 1990 but the meeting did not result in specific proposals. Accordingly, the draft was not implemented. At its 12th session in Algiers, the Standing Commission noted the resolution of the Arab and African leaders on establishment of an Afro-Arab preferential trading area and requested the Secretaries-General of the League of Arab States and African Union to expedite discussions to establish this area. However, the interruption of the meetings of the Standing Commission resulted in the failure to complete consultations on this project.

588. The Council of the League of Arab States and Council of Ministers of the former Organization of African Unity approved the recommendations of the tenth session of the Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation held in Kuwait in1989, relating to the organization of an Afro-Arab Trade Fair. The first fair was held in Tunis (October 1993), the second in Johannesburg (October 1995), the third in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates (December 1996), the fourth in Dakar, Senegal (April 1999), the fifth in Tripoli, Lebanon (October 2001) and the sixth in Tanzania (September 2003). It is hoped to hold the seventh fair in Khartoum at the end of 2006. The Afro-Arab Trade Fair is one of the most prominent successes of Afro-Arab cooperation and is receiving increasing publicity and attention. The cultural forums and seminars held within its schedule of events provide an opportunity for the exchange of views and ideas on ways of furthering and promoting Afro-Arab cooperation.

589. The Council of the League of Arab States and Council of Ministers of the former Organization of African Unity agreed to re-institute the Arab and African Businessmen's Week to provide an opportunity for the private sector and Arab and African businessmen to play their part in supporting economic, commercial and investment cooperation between the Arab and African States. The first Businessmen's Week was held in Cairo (March 1995), while the second was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (November 1998), on the fringe of the industries and

crafts fair but no further Businessmen's Weeks have since been held. For them to continue and develop requires political drive.

590. The economic documents of the 1977 Afro-Arab Summit were limited to defining areas of cooperation. They did not set out an integrated programme for an economic strategy to regulate the path of cooperation or define the goals and priorities of the stages, projects and programmes. Accordingly, it is no surprise that the economic aspect of cooperation relies upon cooperation in the area of finance which, by its nature, is one-sided namely, one side gives and the other side receives. This hastily conceived approach does not meet the needs for the establishment of lasting cooperation capable of confronting the problems of Afro-Arab development.

591. Furthermore, the method of providing Arab aid demonstrably needs to be reviewed since it has been shown that, notwithstanding its size, Arab aid lacks a presence in African development activity. Arab aid is provided within a framework of joint financing to which other regional and international parties contribute a large share, causing Arab financial aid to disappear within the substantial amounts of non-Arab financing. Although it has acquired preferential terms, Arab financial aid to Africa has contributed to supporting and expanding the activities of multi-lateral financial organizations in the countries of the South generally, under the slogan of international development. All these transactions and relations take place within the framework of economies subordinate to a global economy in which multi-national companies play a key role and cooperation has sometimes moved in a direction contrary to that of realizing the principal of collective self-reliance. The goals of cooperation are clear but the strategic concept lacks a relationship building that includes, in its economic aspect, the areas of trade, production, exchange and distribution.

592. The experiment in cooperation has shown the need to rely upon Arab and African brains, industry, firms of experts and national organizations in the study, organization, implementation, construction and management phases so that Afro-Arab cooperation does not become a tool for deepening subordination. It is within such a framework that the role of Arab technical assistance lies, particularly given that implementation of most development projects in the field of technical studies are carried out by European consultants.

593. The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) is undertaking important, pioneering work through support for development efforts and provision of economic, financial and technical assistance in African States. Total loans to African States from 1975 to 2005 were US$ 2,790.338 million, of which US$ 2,706.1 million was allocated for the funding of 379 development projects from 1975 to 2005. During the same period, net project loan pledges were US$ 2,167.853 million, of which US$ 1,167.443 million (approximately 53.85%) was allocated to infrastructure, US$ 604.422 million (approximately 27.88%) to agriculture and rural development, US$ 153.485 million (approximately 7.08%) to the energy sector, US$ 52.928 million (approximately 2.44%) to industry, US$ 66.290 million (approximately 3.07%) to the private sector, US$ 110.650 million (approximately 5.10%) to the social sector and US$ 12.635 million (approximately 0.58%) to urgent aid programmes. In addition 59 loans were made by the lending fund to support the balance of payments of African countries. Total pledges by this fund amounted to US$ 214.244 million, bringing net project and fund loan pledges to US$ 2,382.097 million, after deduction of cancellations. BADEA has provided a total of

US$ 84.238 million within the technical assistance framework since it commenced financing operations in 1975, until 2005, allocated to cover the costs of 352 operations, distributed among feasibility studies, institutional support, training and experts. These operations involved all countries qualifying for BADEA assistance, totalling 43 African countries, as well as 5 regional groupings and 17 regional organizations. It is worth mentioning that BADEA has paid particular attention to joint funding of development projects with, in particular, Arab financing organizations, in view of the funding possibilities this approach gives for the large projects submitted by African States benefiting from its assistance. The total cost of projects in which BADEA contributed financing together with other organizations during the period 1975 to 2005 was approximately US$ 13,090.217 million, of which its share was 15.38%. The contribution of other Arab funds, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) was 18.76%, bringing the contribution of Arab financing, IDB and OFID to 34.14%. Other sources of financing, including the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank, Governments of the industrialized nations, the European Union, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the West African Development Bank, contributed approximately 39.19%, while beneficiary States and bodies provided some 25.95%. BADEA is keen to participate in the establishment of Afro-Arab trade fairs, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and the African Union and its contribution is represented by bearing the costs of exhibitors' pavilions and the expenses of transporting exhibitors and exhibits from the poorest African countries to the venues.

594. Experience in the economic field shows the following.

- It is important to prepare an integrated and clear African investment map, updated regularly in the light of new developments, on the basis of field studies and in a form allowing all national and foreign investors to be fully aware of investment opportunities; the map should include those projects it is wished to promote in all economic sectors.
- The need for the League of Arab States and African Union to cooperate in establishing an Afro-Arab forum for cooperation, along the lines of existing international forums, and guarantee facilities for its regular convening. It will include all areas and axes of joint Afro-Arab development and benefit from comparable international and regional experience of the private sector and regional agencies of the United Nations.
- The effectiveness of economic and commercial cooperation is linked to the need to have a clear legal framework and political commitment from both parties, particularly in relation to mutual and joint investment.
- The importance of coordination between banks and regional and international African and Arab development funds to define priorities and establish the best mechanisms to achieve the goals; it is important to strive to implement NEPAD projects, while affirming the principle of self-reliance. Economic data on the African continent must be made available to investors.
- Regional economic blocs can play a major role in surmounting the obstacles facing trade and investment between the two parties and should be invited to participate in dialogue on ways of achieving this.

- To work to support existing investment institutions; the need to create a joint Afro-Arab institution to guarantee investment, taking into account that such an institution would be created within the framework of existing decisions that have not been implemented; and to work to draft an agreement to encourage and protect Afro-Arab investment and settle investment disputes in an amicable manner;
- To affirm the importance of land, sea and air links between the Arab States and the African continent, to work to develop the ports, to support existing efforts to develop the road and rail networks, to facilitate regular sea and air transportation routes and to support private sector initiatives in order to develop and enhance mutual investment between the two parties;
- The importance of opening joint investments in information and communication technology;
- To establish joint ventures in various areas where resources and requirements are available and support subscription by the private and public sectors in Arab and African countries;
- Afro-Arab cooperation is not inconsistent with seeking to benefit from the possibilities of joint cooperation (Arab or African) with any states or blocs on the basis of South-South cooperation.
- The importance of organizing joint trade fairs, which should develop from those made up of country-based pavilions into specialized sector-based fairs, involving the private and public sectors and seeking to provide opportunities to establish direct relations between companies and producers from both sides and to create joint federations of investors and businessmen from both sides to exchange views and study potential projects;
- Cooperation should be based upon objective commercial and economic considerations that are incompatible with bias on whatever grounds, whether religious or regional, and within a framework of transparency divorced from the system of brokerage and commissions.
- A focus upon issues of human development and technical and managerial upgrading and training through the creation of joint training centres and support for educational institutions and universities.

595. During the visit of His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal to the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 21 March 2004 and in the presence of the Permanent Representatives, His Excellency affirmed the importance of the Arab world assuming an active role in NEPAD, since it is clear that African leaders are anxious to establish and consolidate partnerships between NEPAD and various international and regional blocs to take advantage of their financial assistance and investment to implement sustainable development projects in African countries. NEPAD has established a partnership with the G8 Group and begun to participate in the meetings of the G8 annual Summit. It has also established a partnership with the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the United Nations system through its specialized agencies, principally the World Bank. I am maintaining contact with the Senegalese side to study the issue of energizing the role of Arab States, Arab finance and investment funds and the Arab private sector in financing development projects

within the framework of the Afro-Arab partnership, under the NEPAD initiative. It has been agreed to put this matter before the African Union and League of Arab States in order to advance the Afro-Arab partnership within the scope of the NEPAD initiative.

596. In keeping with the resolutions of the First Afro-Arab Summit calling for support for Afro-Arab cultural relations, the Standing Commission for Afro-Arab Cooperation approved, at its sixth session in Tunis (February 1983), the draft statutes of the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute submitted by the Secretaries-General of the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity. These were ratified by the Council of the League of Arab States in March 1983 and the Ministerial Council of the Organization of African Unity in July 1985. The Executive Council of the Institute was composed of five states from each side. The Arab side included Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Egypt and the African side, Tunisia, Chad, Senegal, Kenya and Malawi. The Institute's headquarters is situated in Bamako, the Republic of Mali. Both sides agreed that the Institute's director would be Arab and his deputy, African and that the Institute's budget would be shared equally between both sides. The Institute completed the measures for its establishment, its Executive Council held a number of meetings and the Institute commenced activity without, however, sufficient funds being available.

597. The Afro-Arab Cultural Institute being the pioneer joint Afro-Arab institution, both the League of Arab States and the African Union have devoted much attention to its development and to raising its performance at organizational level by according its projects and programmes a significance consistent with its goals and the aspirations of the League and the Union. It was agreed to raise the Institute's annual budget, borne equally by the Arab and African sides, to US$ 800,000. The Secretariat-General of the League agreed to the proposal of the African Union Commission to prepare a comprehensive and integrated feasibility study to transform the Institute into a strategic, Afro-Arab cultural institute concerned with strategic studies, in addition to cultural matters. Pursuant to correspondence between the Secretary-General and Chairperson of the Commission, a working group will be formed from both sides, assisted by independent experts from the Arab and African States, to prepare this study.

598. The cultural bond between Arabs and Africans goes back more than ten centuries, underscoring the need to consolidate this link now and in the future to serve the interests of both parties. One of the principal functions of Afro-Arab cultural, social and media cooperation is to explore and deepen the shared individual and civilizational values between Arabs and Africans. Despite the 1977 Summit documents stressing the importance of the educational, cultural, scientific, technical and media spheres, the results here have been slight.

599. The Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union hold regular meetings to coordinate positions within the International Parliamentary Union, strengthen cooperation between the representative bodies of the two blocs, consolidate the concept of solidarity between them and deepen it in popular quarters, serve the cause of democracy and human rights, combat racial discrimination and promote social and economic progress and issues of common interest in international assemblies.

600. The cultural aspect of Afro-Arab cooperation is extremely important, given the richness and diversity of Arab and African cultural interaction across the ages. This

is clear from certain similar customs and traditions, linguistic affinities and borrowings and the development of popular arts. In the past, however, this area has not received proper attention. There has also been an absence of joint cultural institutions and lack of contact with donor institutions in the countries of both parties. Additionally, educational institutions on both sides have not paid sufficient attention to Arab and African cultures and their creativity, thus creating a deficiency and distortion of the picture of the Arab and the African for one another.

601. The shaky picture the Arab and the African have of each other and the lack of the required knowledge of each other's culture is attributable to inappropriate and deficient school curricula, given their association with concepts the West strives to inculcate among the peoples of the Arab and African nations. It is noticeable that most curricula have been developed outside the Arab and African nations or by experts from foreign countries.

602. The frailty of the Afro-Arab encounter and its lack of momentum have failed to provide scope for the formation of new institutions, let alone joint or multi-lateral institutions. This requires that measures such as the following be taken on the cultural level:

- To convene a meeting of Arab and African Ministers of Culture to set joint policy and action programmes to help to overcome the negative aspects of the past and open new horizons for cooperation to encourage the creation of joint institutions, in accordance with the principles of freedom of action and thought, that are capable of competing openly at regional and international levels;
- The joint institutions the Arab and African sides resolve to create should be a source of enlightenment and not polarization.
- To establish educational institutions to support development of programmes and establish training courses within existing institutions;
- To increase opportunities for reciprocal artistic, technical and scientific training between Arab and African countries and define areas of cooperation in scientific research and teacher exchange;
- To activate, encourage and guide the role of Arab communities in African countries and African communities in Arab countries to promote cultural and intellectual encounter and engagement;
- To study the external influences on Arab and African cultures and the positive and negative effects thereof;
- To use the important periods in Arab and African history to highlight the historical solidarity between the peoples of the two regions, treating them as Afro-Arab occasions with significant impact on the process of cultural bonding; the need to hold meetings on such African occasions between Arab and African figures prominent in the arts, culture and literature;
- To devise areas in which to award prizes, medals and certificates of merit to Arab and African competitors in various cultural, literary and scientific fields;
- The League of Arab States and the African Union should study and revive certain activities in which it may be possible to award certificates recognized

by the countries of both parties, thereby increasing aspects of joint cooperation and competition between Arabs and Africans.

- To expand the creation of joint Afro-Arab professional associations and societies;
- To cooperate in promoting and energizing South-south cooperation to combat and prevent disease, particularly HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, such as famine, drought, desertification, etc., and to establish joint structures to work in these areas;
- To consolidate the links between Arab and African journalists by means of the Federation of Arab Journalists, the Union of African Journalists, the Arab Writers Union and the African Writers Union;
- To support joint Afro-Arab film and television productions and select several large-scale projects to celebrate joint historical events and values and assist in a new reading of Afro-Arab history;
- To establish an Afro-Arab games, along the lines of the Mediterranean Games;
- To support and develop joint sporting activities, such as football tournaments, etc., given their positive contribution to the strengthening of relations between peoples.

603. I have sought to address the principal achievements of Afro-Arab cooperation and taken pains to assess the progress of this cooperation on the political, economic and cultural levels. I have also put forward several ideas and recommendations. If there is a clear Afro-Arab political will to adopt and implement these, it is believed that Afro-Arab cooperation will make great strides for the benefit of both peoples equally. Perhaps what gives hope and confidence for the future is that there is a common desire on both the Arab and African sides to make practical recommendations to activate Afro-Arab cooperation and remove the obstacles preventing the resumption of progress on new foundations.

The Arab Fund for Technical Assistance to African Countries

604. The Arab Fund for Technical Assistance to African Countries (AFTAAC) has been able to participate in affirming the Arab presence in the African arena through the new action plan approved by its board of directors, which focuses on the following elements:

(a) The trend toward participation with relevant donor organizations to implement joint technical assistance programmes for African countries;

(b) According priority to implementing several AFTAAC programmes in African countries themselves, particularly in the area of training and upgrading; in addition to the material savings in programme implementation, this has provided an opportunity to engage with civil society and media organizations to highlight the Arab assistance given through AFTAAC and emphasize the role of the League of Arab States;

(c) Directing aid to areas that provide an anticipated political return, thereby contributing to the implementation of Arab Summit resolutions to deepen Afro-Arab relations and strengthen cooperation, particularly by organizing special events for diplomats, journalists and others, as well as training courses for building the technical capacity of health and agricultural workers.

605. Evaluation of AFTAAC activity over the last five years requires a number of points to be taken into consideration. Although AFAAC suffers from the lack of commitment of a number of Arab States to pay their annual contributions, by virtue of the new action plan approved by the board of directors, of which the most important elements are the emphasis on the policy of participation in funding and the implementation of training programmes in the African countries themselves (which has resulted in a 50% reduction in the normal costs of implementing such courses), AFTAAC activity and programmes have been successfully increased and, during the last five years, the following were implemented:

- The dispatch of 76 experts in various fields;
- The award of 236 study grants;
- The organization of 40 training courses for the benefit of 1152 trainees from more than 30 African countries.

606. The above figures could be increased several fold and, consequently, the provision of technical assistance to African countries by Joint Arab Action intensified (with the resulting media and political return for the Arab side), if States were committed to paying their annual contributions which, in total, are not more than US$ 5,000,000 dollars, in accordance with the resolution of the Amman Summit (1987).

607. Article 4 of the AFTAAC constitution states that, inter alia, the Fund shall be concerned with the coordination and financing of aid provided by the Secretariat-General and specialized organizations and the invitation to other Arab finance institutions to contribute to the funding of its activities.

608. Given that it is a pan-Arab institution subordinate to the League of Arab States, with technical abilities and experience acquired over the years since its foundation and a network of relations it has built with African countries, AFTAAC is qualified to undertake a coordinating role to assist Member States study and evaluate requests for technical assistance from African countries, monitor those it is decided to implement and provide periodic reports thereon, if charged to do so by Member States.

609. At a time when Western countries, through a number of initiatives, are active in the provision of financial, economic and technical assistance to combat poverty and promote development in Africa, I believe that there should be an intensification of Arab activity to maintain and reinforce the Arab presence on the African continent in the service of Arab interests, backed up by all the resources of Arab institutions, organizations and bodies. As AFTAAC is undoubtedly one of the pioneers of Joint Arab Action in the service of Arab strategic interests, it should be supported materially and politically in order to implement joint Arab policy in Africa. In this context, I would like to commend Member States that pay their contributions to the AFTAAC budget, thereby enabling it to carry out its tasks.

Arab relations with the United States of America

610. Arab relations with the United States of America occupy and important place in the activity of the League of Arab States and the level of attention has increased in the light of the grave developments in the situation in the Arab region and the unprecedented challenges it is facing. The United States has a pivotal role at the global political and strategic level and regional impact, whether in relation to the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the issue of Iraq, its increasing presence in the Middle East, its call for a Middle East bloc, the goals of which remain unclear, or the nuclear situation in the Middle East. I have been anxious to increase contact with the United States, particularly the Administration, in order to explain the Arab stance vis-à-vis these developments.

611. Given the experience of dealing with the current Administration, the US agenda for relations with the Arab world requires, more than at any time in the past, a direct and candid dialogue between both sides to emerge from the state of confusion that has affected these relations since the events of 11 September 2001, and address common interests and the many misunderstandings, in a framework of clarity and transparency. There is no doubt that a common effort and serious dialogue are required to deal with the state of US-Arab relations to address the negative aspects, forge a relationship reflecting the scale of joint interests and serve the cause of peace and stability in the region.

612. Perhaps the statements we have heard from United States' officials and the affirmation of the President himself that it is essential for the United States to have good relations with the Arab world are indicative of the existence of possibilities for dealing with the Arab world with a somewhat more developed vision.

613. The role of the United States in relation to the Palestinian issue is crucial and the possibility of making positive progress in this matter depends upon the extent to which the US Administration is prepared to review its policy whereby its role becomes that of honest broker. While we welcome the statement made by the President at the beginning of his second term that the Administration is committed to achieving peace, that the goal of the establishment of two democratic states living side by side is attainable and that the United States will help to achieve this goal, we have not seen any genuine indication of addressing the dispute in an objective and impartial manner.

614. In my dealings with all the major international players, chief among them the United States, I have been anxious to clarify the Arab position on developments in the Palestinian issue, affirm the Arab view of the requirements for a just and equitable peace in the region and that the failure to resolve this issue will lead to the continuation of the climate of tension in the region. I have affirmed the need to deal objectively with the Arab-Israeli dispute and that the role of the United States must be that of an honest and impartial broker. I have made it clear that the solution does not lie in calling for meetings around the negotiating table then continuing in a vicious circle for years, as has been the case in the past. Negotiations are, without doubt, a positive step but must be conducted in accordance with a specific agenda and be governed by international law, legitimate resolutions and established principles, such as land for peace. In addition, it is important that the President Bush fulfills his promise and exerts efforts to implement his vision of the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. I have made it clear that the peace process shall not be concluded without efforts on all tracks of the Arab-Israeli dispute and affirmed the

need for US cooperation with Syria to reach a comprehensive solution and that dialogue, communication and mutual understanding are the means to be employed in this context to achieve a comprehensive settlement.

615. Regarding the situation in Iraq, the focus of the League's activity with the US side has been on explaining the Arab view of developments in the situation, affirming that the Iraq situation is no less important to us than the Palestinian issue; drawing attention to the dangers of any policy or action leading to the break-up of Iraq or of dealing with it on a sectarian basis; affirming that, at this stage, Iraq needs the help of all; that it is essential to avoid the dangers of partition and civil war; and the importance of comprehensive dialogue between all Iraqi factions in order to reach general agreement among the various groups in Iraqi society on the future of the country.

616. Likewise, the situation in the Sudan requires that regional efforts led by the African Union be given an opportunity, rather than the precipitate adoption of resolutions by the Security Council.

617. In relation to reform in the Middle East, it was observed that, at the start of his second term, the US President made the theme of the spread of freedom and democracy a priority on the US agenda for the coming phase.

618. In a number of meetings with the US side, I have affirmed that there is no difference between us and any other party in relation to reform, that the Arab world aspires to reform and is striving to develop and modernize its institutions and that this is a response to a desire that proceeds from within and corresponds to its own interests. I affirmed that this subject is a priority for the Arab world and the League of Arab States, and is an absolute necessity within the context of its historical development in accordance with new demands and circumstances, some of which are general and others specific to each individual country. Assistance will be sought from the experience of others within a framework of cooperation, partnership and solidarity among states and peoples. The reform process is continuing and notable progress has been achieved, as indicated by the document issued by the Arab Summit in Tunis on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States.

Arab-European relations

619. During the course of last year, Europe witnessed important developments and changes that strengthened the ability of the countries of the European Union to magnify their political and economic role, both at the level of the process of internal integration and in playing a more effective and influential part in the course of events. In terms of the consolidation of European unity, membership of the European Union expanded to include ten states from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. This was not merely an expansion in form and number but also in terms of the opening of markets, the setting of overall policy and the move toward establishing a unified foreign policy, speaking with one voice. It confirmed the credibility of the quest for unity and institutionalization of the single European entity through the insistence upon convincing the Europeans of the need to approve a new constitution defining the features and requirements of the new phase of constitutional arrangements to guarantee the success of the European Union's future strategies in all areas. This was accompanied by a reshaping of the European Commission, making it more representative, in line with interim goals and

programmes, not only to avoid the failures of the past but also to set a practical course for the enhanced role for the European Union outside its own domain.

620. Although the European Union continues to see the Barcelona Process, instituted to establish an area of peace, stability, free trade (by 2010) and continuing dialogue of cultures, as the most positive initiative for achieving partnership with the Mediterranean countries, the listlessness and languor that has marred some aspects of this partnership has led to the conviction that there is a need to give fresh impetus, establish priorities and create operational mechanisms that are more advanced and appropriate to the demands of the modern concept of international cooperation. Accordingly, initiatives have been advanced to develop the approach and improve ways and means. In this context, the European Union initiated the New Neighbourhood and Strategic Partnership policies with the countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East. These two policies involve development of the goals of the Barcelona Process and indications of greater benefits for the partners, in accordance with criteria of conditionality promising the relevant countries more assistance, if they make progress in implementing certain programmes, particularly those relating to the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Although the New Neighbourhood policy is considered complementary to the Barcelona Process, it has been extended to include Eastern European States that are not members of the European Union. As well as the associated principle of conditionality, this policy is based on the principle of granting partners, in accordance with criteria of readiness and commitment, a status higher than partnership but less than membership. Bilateral negotiations have begun between the European Union and the countries of the region to agree upon programmes within national action plans. Employing the principle of coordination within the framework of the western alliance, the trend has emerged of charging the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) with several of the tasks in implementation if these goals. Dialogue has begun with several Mediterranean States, including Arab States, on specific aspects within this framework and prompt follow-up of developments is required by the League of Arab States and its relevant agencies.

621. Despite the European reliance on the Barcelona Process as an institutional framework for relations, as outlined above, this process needs direction and new impetus and all members of the partnership need to look at re-evaluating it and putting in place new concepts for its future progress. The tenth anniversary of the launch of the Barcelona Process was in 2005 but the event passed without any new visions put forward for it to proceed smoothly and effectively. Despite the importance of the Barcelona process and the need to energize it, we believe that the challenges facing both sides and the common interests binding them necessitate a serious, joint dialogue on new bases and goals and simplified working mechanisms. During our dialogue with European officials, we have been impressed that the Arab States have been bound collectively within the League of Arab States by pan-Arab policies, stances and strategies requiring the cooperation and dialogue to be comprehensive. However, while dialogue with geographic groupings with the Arab world have been beneficial, they are not sufficient to create a framework for collective agreement on addressing jointly the problems and challenges facing both Europe and the Arab world.

622. Regardless, we must draw attention to European attitudes on Arab issues, represented by a desire to play a greater part in the peace process and not to be content with the role of aid donor. Indications have emerged that the European

Union was concerned to present its concept of this role during meetings between European and US officials, chief among them President George W. Bush. This subject was one of the most important dealt with in our many meetings with European ministers, where we noticed a European desire to play an active role within the framework of the current dialogue on the means of addressing developments in the region and an increased European involvement in defining the stages and substance of action vis-à-vis a peaceful settlement.

623. Given the anticipated impact of the accession of a number of Central and Eastern European States to the European Union and in view of the possible consequences of this on the collective European position on a range of issues, due to the strategic relations binding these countries through NATO, we have endeavoured to initiate a dialogue with the European Union by holding numerous meetings with senior officials and drawing up programmes of visits by officials in the Secretariat-General. This dialogue also includes the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia in view of their strategic importance and historical and cultural relations with the Arab people.

624. Within the context of openness to frameworks for the setting of international policy and organizations concerned with issues of security, stability, peace and development, our efforts have focused in the past on developing cooperative relations with influential regional organizations, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, given that their treatment of strategic issues is significant for the Arab States, who are anxious to clarify their position toward such issues.

The South American and Arab Countries Summit

625. The first South American and Arab Countries Summit, held in Brasilia from 10 to 11 May 2005, represented an unprecedented development in relations between the Arab and South American States and a prominent marker in the history of relations between these two, geographically distant, groupings within the context of significant attempts at South-South cooperation.

626. The belief of a number of Arab leaders in the importance of Arab relations with the states of South America played a significant role in responding to the initiative of Brazil to hold this Summit.

627. On 9 December 2003, in the context of preparations for the Summit, I received President Lula da Silva of Brazil, who met with the Permanent Representatives to the League of Arab States and the Ambassadors of the South American countries in Cairo, in order to consult on the manner of activating the idea of convening a joint conference.

628. The Arab Summit (Tunis, 23 May 2004) welcomed the convening of this Summit and requested the Secretary-General to monitor coordination, cooperation and consultations with Member States and concerned bodies.

629. In the context of preparations for the Summit, the Secretariat-General took part in all arrangements and meetings of senior officials, as well as in joint meetings at ministerial level. The Secretariat-General was responsible for coordination on the Arab side, while Brazil undertook this task on the South American side.

630. A meeting of Arab and South American Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held on 23 September 2003, on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York to discuss arrangements and preparations for the Summit.

631. I participated at the head of a delegation from the Secretariat-General in the Summit preliminary meeting, at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both sides, hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco from 24 to 25 March 2005 in Marrakech, designed to prepare the final draft of the Summit declaration.

632. From 2 to 5 April 2005, I made an official visit to Brazil, where I met with the Brazilian President and Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss arrangements for the Summit.

633. From 6 to 7 May 2005, I visited the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires, where I held discussions with the Argentine President, Minister of Foreign Affairs and officials, focusing on the subject of Summit preparations.

634. The Secretariat-General assumed the role of coordinator of the Arab side in the South American and Arab Countries Summit held from 10 to 11 May 2005 in Brasilia, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the Arab side and His Excellency Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of the Republic of Brazil for the South American side. A final communiqué (the Brasilia Declaration) was issued, focusing on the bases on which the Summit was held and the desired goals of cooperation between the two groupings. This translated into the focus upon a number of principles:

- Cooperation between the two regions to achieve peace, security and stability in the world, on the basis of a commitment to support the United Nations, respect for international law, prohibiting the spread of nuclear weapons, respect for human rights and human rights legislation, the achievement of social justice by eliminating poverty and famine, and protection of the environment;
- Commitment to respect for national sovereignty and the peaceful and equitable settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and principles of international law;
- The building of confidence and mutual understanding to achieve peaceful cooperation between nations and dialogue between cultures and civilizations;
- The necessity for developing countries to acquire the tools of scientific and technological progress in order to benefit their societies;
- The need for collective opposition to international terrorism in all its forms, as a crime against innocent civilians that undermines the stability of societies and impedes their development;
- Support for democracy in international relations and national development and a determination to oppose and stamp out corruption.

635. The leaders of both blocs being anxious for this Summit to be not only a significant and historic event but also an institutional event, by the creation of appropriate mechanisms to ensure that an ongoing process is begun, in order to achieve the lasting cooperation that will produce the tangible results desired by both sides, the Brasilia Declaration included the following:

- The Second South American and Arab Countries Summit will be held in the Kingdom of Morocco in 2008.
- The next meeting of Arab and Latin-American Foreign Ministers will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2007.
- Extraordinary meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both sides will be held as required.
- A meeting of senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials will be held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States in November 2005.
- There is the possibility of holding sector-based meetings at ministerial level on issues of trade and investment, transport, tourism, culture, science and technology, among others.
- A meeting of ministers concerned with economic affairs in the two regions will be held in Quito, Ecuador.

636. The following has been achieved regarding follow-up of the substance of the Brasilia Declaration in a number of areas of cooperation:

- I called for a four-way meeting to be held on 18 September 2005 with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Brazil and Peru, on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the United Nations to discuss and assess the extent of progress in implementing the outputs of the Summit.
- A meeting of senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Arab and South American States was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League on 29 November 2005. The sides discussed a number of important issues in areas of joint cooperation and agreed on the timing and agenda for forthcoming meetings, including:
    - The convening of a joint meeting of ministers concerned with economic affairs from 25 to 26 April 2006 in Quito, Ecuador, to be preceded by a preparatory meeting of senior officials from 23 to 24 April 2006;
    - The convening of a joint meeting of Ministers of Culture at the end of January or first week of February 2006, in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria;
    - The recommendation of the governments of both sides to give consideration to the holding of a joint meeting of Ministers of Social Affairs at the earliest opportunity;
    - The invitation to ministers responsible for environmental affairs to discuss the possibility of holding a meeting to put in place possible mechanisms for environmental cooperation between the countries of both groups;
    - The convening of regular joint meetings of senior officials, the next of which will be held in one of the South American countries within six months;

- The holding of regular, biannual, consultative meetings between the President of the Arab Summit, the joint chair of the Arab side at the Brasilia Summit (Algeria), the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States, the chair of the South American bloc and the joint chair of the South American bloc at the Brasilia Summit (Brazil); emergency consultations may be held, as required;
- The convening of specialized forums and conferences to deal with aspects of cooperation stated in the Brasilia Declaration.

637. In this context, it is appropriate to mention that the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs welcomed, in a resolution of 19 December 2005, the convening of a joint meeting between Arab and South American Ministers of Social Affairs.

638. The Council of Arab Ministers of the Environment welcomed, in a resolution of 21 December 2005, the convening of a joint meeting with their South American counterparts and to consider holding it at the same time as the 18th session of Arab Ministers of the Environment to be held in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria from 19 to 20 December 2006.

639. The joint meeting of Arab and South American Ministers of Culture was held from 2 to 3 February 2006 in Algiers, where it was agreed to establish the Arab-South American Library, to be located in Algiers. Agreement was also reached on the establishment of a South American research institute in the Kingdom of Morocco.

640. Agreement was also reached on holding the joint ministerial meeting of the two blocs alternately every two years

641. In the light of the results of the Brasilia Summit, to consolidate links with the countries of South America, to boost contact with Arab communities in these countries and in response to the desire evinced by officials in Brazil and Argentina for the establishment of Arab League representation in Brasilia and Buenos Aires, the Council of the League of Arab States resolved, on 8 September 2005 to reopen the League's missions in Brasilia and Buenos Aires. I appointed the head of the Brasilia mission on 6 October 2005 and an agreement was signed for the site of the Buenos Aires mission, prior to reopening.

642. The Secretariat-General continues to maintain the dynamic initiated at Brasilia in order to provide an organized framework for coordination, action and furtherance of cooperation between the two blocs to arrive at the stage of partnership and prepare for the second joint Summit to be held in the Kingdom of Morocco in 2008, preceded by the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Argentina in 2007.

Establishment of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum

643. Sino-Arab cooperation has acquired particular importance in view of the many changes in recent times, of which the most prominent are political polarization, the spread of satellite media, the rapid advance toward trade liberalization and globalization of the economy, the tense situation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, the announcement of the so-called Greater Middle East Initiative and the expanding membership of the European Union.

644. The importance of the subject is increased by China's growing strength, expanding political and economic role and affirmation that the principal tasks of the Chinese people in the 21st century are to maintain the momentum of modernization, complete reunification, maintain global peace and consolidate joint development. These factors qualify China to play a prominent role in reducing the imbalance of power at international level as a result of the concentration of military and economic weight in one direction. The importance of cooperation between the two parties is further increased by the consideration that the Arab region is an extension of China's strategic environment and was, indeed, adjacent to China in the period of Islamic expansion from the 8th century, when the boundaries of the Islamic world reached into China's western region.

645. The Arab world possesses elements of conspicuous and latent strength that qualify it to adapt itself and contribute to shaping a different future for humanity. The calls for reform and modernization of its institutions are increasing, quite apart from its prominent geographic situation and tremendous material and human resources, chief among these being energy, which represents the arteries of the modern renaissance, as well as its civilizing influence throughout history as the cradle of the three revealed religions, giving it spiritual and cultural weight throughout the entire world. The capacity of both the Chinese and Arab nations to shape the lives of their peoples and the general life of humanity will be influenced by the extent to which they are able to develop modes and activate channels of cooperation to consolidate the ties between them and spread the values and principles of civilized conduct they have in common.

646. Through joint cooperation, China and the Arab bloc have the ability to advance a pioneering model of human relations, making the present century one of peace and harmony, in which humanity is free from the violence and wars witnessed throughout the 20th century.

647. The fact is that all existing data and forecasts confirm that Sino-Arab cooperation is on the threshold of a promising phase of growth and expansion. This has led Chinese officials to state that unity between Eastern Asia, where China is situated, and Western Asia and North Africa, where the Arab countries are, would have an impact upon many aspects of the course of international events and contribute to realizing the call for multi-polarity and overcoming the difficulties that beset this goal at international level.

648. It may therefore be said that Sino-Arab cooperation will inevitably produce many positive benefits for both sides, for the following reasons:

- The Arab world needs to establish close, developing and parallel relations with all the international powers, especially China, by employing its considerable potential and directing its economic assets toward the consolidation and development of these relations and turning them to its advantage. Economic potential is bound to be a major factor in gaining a prominent friend such as China in order to achieve legitimate national interests.

- That both the Chinese and Arab parties are still in the process of economic liberalization and privatization is a situation that can be turned to advantage in developing joint relations and exchanging experience, particularly given that China has extensive experience in this vital area.
- China represents the world's largest market in terms of supply and demand and will continue to be a major importer and exporter at international level. It is also a major import market for oil and gas, particularly from the Arab region, which is itself expected to remain the principal exporter supplying the world with these commodities until the middle of the present century.
- The Arab world's establishment of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area is a powerful incentive for China to increase cooperation with the Arab States, given the great size of this market. It is also an incentive to establish new Sino-Arab joint investment cooperation, particularly given that China currently relies upon three axes (essentially economic) in the management of its policy toward the Arab States namely, its need for oil and gas, its desire to sell more Chinese products and its wish to attract foreign investment, quite apart from the preservation of good relations with the countries of the region.
- The cultural contact between China and the Arab countries throughout history was based on the land and sea Silk Route, which was not only a trade route but also a bridge for knowledge and understanding between the Arabs and China. Sino-Arab relations have always been characterized by cooperation and mutual understanding and have been free from rancour and antagonism. China has never had any expansionist ambitions or hostility toward the Arab world. Indeed, it has supported its just causes and this has led to a state of trust permeating Sino-Arab relations.

649. Pursuant to this strategic vision of Sino-Arab relations, the initiative to establish the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum followed the visit of the President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao, to the headquarters of the League of Arab States on 30 January 2004. The Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level approved, on 4 March 2004, the instrument of declaration of Sino-Arab cooperation, establishing a new partnership between the Arab world and China focusing on the following four areas:

- The strengthening of political relations on the basis of mutual respect;
- The intensification of economic and commercial exchange with the aim of achieving joint development;
- The expansion and deepening of cultural contacts for mutual benefit;
- Cooperation in international affairs to further joint development efforts.

650. Within the context of monitoring implementation of the axes of the Forum, the 124th session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level adopted a resolution on 8 September 2005 on the development of Sino-Arab relations, affirming the desire of Member States to strengthen these relations in various fields, welcoming the appointment of the Chinese Ambassador to Egypt as Chinese delegate to the League of Arab States, welcoming the positive results achieved by the businessmen's conference of the first session of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum and the results and recommendations of the meeting of senior officials at the second session of the Forum, agreeing to convene the second

ministerial meeting of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum next summer in Beijing and charging the Secretariat-General with liaising and consulting with the Chinese side on the timing and draft agenda of this meeting.

651. The first businessmen's conference within the framework of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing, China from 12 to 13 April 2005 and attended by more than 1,000 businessmen and officials from various Arab and Chinese companies and firms. It was remarkably successful and a number of important agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed to strengthen economic and commercial cooperation between the Arab States and China. A follow-up committee of businessmen from both sides was formed and agreement was reached on holding the second businessmen's conference in 2007, in one of the Arab States.

652. This was followed by a meeting of senior Arab and Chinese officials in Beijing from 13 to 18 June 2005 to review and implement the axes of the action programme of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, with focus on three main subjects namely, Sino-Arab relations, the key areas of Sino-Arab cooperation and preparations for the second ministerial meeting of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, scheduled for 31 May and 1 June 2006 in Beijing.

653. Within the framework of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, a seminar on Sino-Arab relations and the Sino-Arab civilization dialogue was held in Beijing from 12 to 13 December 2005. This was attended by officials from the Chinese and Arab Ministries of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Secretariat-General and Council of Arab Ambassadors in Beijing and researchers and experts from China and 17 Arab States, as well as from the Arab Thought Forum and Arab Thought Foundation. The seminar discussed two keys issues namely, the perspectives of Sino-Arab relations and the Sino-Arab civilization dialogue, and affirmed the importance of strengthening the civilization dialogue between the two sides within the framework of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum. The participants made a number of recommendations including, to continue the civilization dialogue within the framework of the Forum and to hold dialogue seminars annually or every two years hosted alternately by each side. It was agreed to hold the next seminar in an Arab country and the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco expressed its readiness to host the seminar in 2006.

654. The political aspect of Sino-Arab relations likewise witnessed significant activity. On 20 April 2005, I discussed developments in these relations with the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister in the light of the joint meetings to implement the programmes of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum. The Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister held a meeting with the Permanent Representatives of the Arab States at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General, where discussions focused on an exchange of views on reform of the United Nations and Security Council and on Sino-Arab relations.

The Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum

655. The Republic of Tunisia presented a proposal on the establishment of a Japan-Arab economic forum, pursuant to the wish of the Japanese party to consolidate a partnership with the Arab States, as announced in the letter of the Japanese special envoy to the Tunis Summit (2004). The Tunisian party proceeded to consult with its Japanese counterpart on the idea of establishing a Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum. The

latter immediately welcomed the idea and expressed their eagerness and desire to complete the measures necessary to realize this as soon as possible. The Japanese official requested he be provided with all information and Arab proposals relating to the time and place of the first session of this Forum, which the Japanese side was anxious to establish within the framework of Japan's increasing interest in the Arab region.

656. The subject of the creation of a Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum was put before the 74th ordinary session of the Economic and Social Council, meeting in Cairo from 6 to 9 September 2004. The Council adopted resolution 1536 (9 September 2004) welcoming the proposal of the Republic of Tunisia to create a Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum concerned with economic and investment issues, technical cooperation, scientific research and development and human resource development, giving the private sector a prominent role in the Forum. The Economic and Social Council will monitor activity and the Secretariat-General conduct the necessary liaison with the Japanese side to prepare the executive measures for establishment of the Forum. The Council also welcomed the proposal from the Republic of Tunisia to host the first session.

657. The Secretariat-General drafted ideas on a mode of operation for the Forum, which included:

- Mechanism of the Forum: the Forum should be high-level, consisting of the Ministers of the Economy, Trade and Industry in order to give the necessary weight. The Forum should meet regularly every two years and alternate between an Arab State and Japan, noting that a proposal has been made to hold the first session in the Republic of Tunisia (as proposer of the initiative).
- Areas of cooperation: these should include trade, investment, energy, the environment and sustainable development, scientific and technological research and labour.

658. The Secretariat-General spoke with the Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo to provide it with the Council of Arab Ambassadors' conception of the Forum's mode of operation.

659. A memorandum from the Tunisian Ambassador to Japan (the Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps) was received on 15 March 2005, attaching the ideas of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Tokyo on the work of the Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum. The Secretary-General studied the ideas of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, which contained several positive elements but was, nevertheless, general, focusing on details of implementation rather than addressing the actual structure of the work of the Forum.

660. On 5 July 2005, I sent a letter to the Tunisian Ambassador, as Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps in Japan, containing the mode of operation for the Forum for the Council of Arab Ambassadors to study and comment on, in preparation for consultations with the Japanese party. I stressed the importance of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Tokyo determining the Japanese view of the Forum's mode of operation to ensure the Japanese side has a vision that will help in opening up new horizons for cooperation between the two sides. To date, the Secretariat-General has not received a reply.

661. Commencing from its 122nd session, the Council of the League at ministerial level addressed this subject and requested the Secretary-General to continuing his liaison and present the results to the next session of the Economic and Social Council.

662. Arab relations with other Asian countries, such as India and Pakistan, have not been ignored by the Secretariat-General, which is working to strengthen and further these.

Amre Moussa
15 March 2006

Annex IV to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Report of the Secretary-General on Follow-up of the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States (Vol. 1)

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I. Introduction

1. I have been keen to devote an annex on the annual report submitted to the Summit on the follow-up to the process of development and modernization current in the Arab world, in implementation of the Declaration on Development and Modernization in the Arab States issued by the Tunis Summit (2004) and affirmed at the Algiers Summit (2005) and by other documents issued within the Arab framework namely, the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity among Arab leaders, the Arab Charter of Human Rights and documents that have been tirelessly issued by Arab Summits, such as the Amman Declaration, the Beirut Declaration, the Tunis Declaration (2004) and the Algiers Declaration (2005). These documents contain the pan-Arab approaches and commitments to achieving political, economic, cultural and social reforms within a clear framework of common Arab themes for the programme of Arab action to reinforce reform efforts, consolidate the foundations of democracy and human rights, the rights of women in the path toward sustainable development and the participation of youth, bolster the components of civil society, affirm freedom of the press and of expression, modernize the economy, develop the judiciary, raise the level of educational systems and scientific research, build a knowledge society to narrow the information technology gap in the service of our countries and peoples and guarantee the Arab nation the ability to react positively to the changes and dangers of the age.

2. The Tunis document affirmed that the path of reform must arise from inner volition and that the special characteristics and circumstances, both convergent and divergent, of Arab societies must be taken into account. This will give an opportunity to each Arab society to advance reform measures appropriate to its own conditions, respond to the will of its people and preserve its own characteristics of culture and civilization within a general Arab movement toward reform and modernization. Despite talking about reform programmes, initiatives from overseas are defective in their strategic vision and their assumptions flawed by motives that express a vision of security first and foremost. From their perspective, reform and democracy in the region are the major factors in eradicating the terrorism visited upon Europe and the United States from the countries defined by the Western States as "the Wider Middle East", ignoring the fact that striving to eliminate terrorism in Arab societies must proceed within a framework that includes other societies taking similar measures to eliminate extremist tendencies against Arab and Islamic societies and, likewise, take a just and equitable stance vis-à-vis issues of concern to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

3. Our interaction with the international community is founded on clear bases of equality, dialogue, mutual respect for diversity of culture and civilization and awareness of the contribution of Arab and Islamic civilization in the building of human civilization and our ongoing contributions to the strengthening of regional and international peace, security and stability.

4. We are all agreed that any kind of reform is an uninterrupted sequence, with none of the links in the chain missing. Poverty will not be eradicated without sustainable development and sustainable development will not be achieved without the provision of security. The provision of security will not be achieved without the elimination of terrorist practices, war and foreign occupation and these scourges shall not be eliminated without the rule of law which, in turn, shall not be achieved without a strong and just international order.

5. Reform and development on the one hand and the provision of security and stability on the other are two sides of the same coin. The achievement of sustainable development and genuine reform in the Middle East require stability based principally on the achievement of a lasting, comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. We have all affirmed our commitment to peace as a strategic option, as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Beirut Summit with its key points and principles guaranteeing a lasting, comprehensive and just peace on all tracks, allowing all peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

6. Reform and security are two issues, neither of which has precedence over the other. Indeed, they can and must advance forward together. There is no doubt that a regional security order that achieves balance, takes the security of all into account and prevents the presence of weapons of mass destruction, chief among them nuclear weapons, without exception, will create a secure environment in which societies can progress. Without this, nothing will save the region from a full-blown arms race threatening regional security and stability in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, all due to the nuclear collusion with Israel, making the policy of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation a two-faced policy without credibility and, in consequence, lacking in effectiveness.

7. Arab Summits have affirmed the openness of the Arab States to the world and their interaction with events. They have no objection to dialogue with international powers to benefit from their experience in the areas of development and modernization. In fact, they welcome initiatives and approaches in support of their efforts but within a framework of a comprehensive understanding of partnership with different countries, guaranteeing the right of sustainable development to all peoples, disseminating the values of dialogue, tolerance and even-handedness in international relations and repudiating tendencies of extremism, hatred and discrimination, on the basis of balanced joint interest rather than the imposition of hegemony and domination or surrendering to dictates.

8. As regards follow-up to the forums on reform and development in the Arab region, the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted the second session of the Forum for the Future from 11 to 12 November 2005 in Manama. I participated in this Forum, which was attended by representatives of 36 countries and chaired jointly by Bahrain and the United Kingdom. The axes of the Forum revolved around four themes: the role of women in economic and social development, human rights, transparency and combating corruption, and the rule of law.

9. A parallel meeting of civil society organizations took place in Manama shortly before the Forum, consisting of a dialogue between governments and non-governmental organizations. These organizations called upon governments in the region to set a timetable for the reforms they intend to implement.

10. It has been decided that a conference between the G8 group of countries and those of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (G8/BMENA) will be held on the sidelines of the Davos World Economic Forum on the Middle East in Sharm El-Sheikh scheduled for 20 to 22 May 2006. This conference will provide an opportunity for governments and the private sector to benefit from G8 proposals relating to the growth of local and regional commerce, enterprise support and increasing investment. For our part, I believe that, in the course of this conference, we should define the region's priorities, particularly in terms of support for the general reform efforts as well as study the obstacles that need to be removed to

facilitate trade and increase investment flows to the region, and present practical proposals for activating the partnership between the two sides.

11. Several Arab States have made achievements at national level in the deepening of democracy, expansion of political participation, the development of elections and issues of human rights. This has been done through a range of measures, including the development of the necessary laws and legislation to speed up the pace of reform and effect constitutional reforms. For example, the State of Kuwait held direct elections for the National Assembly with the participation of women for the first time. The Kingdom of Bahrain and State of Qatar carried out a series of reforms to expand political participation, consolidate freedom of expression and effect constitutional amendments. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held municipal council elections in several regions and announced that elections would be held in the remaining regions later. The organization of legislative elections was announced in the United Arab Emirates. A number of Arab States, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Yemen, revised their laws relating to political reform and modernization to bring these into line with modern trends. Significant constitutional amendments were announced in the Arab Republic of Egypt, permitting multiple candidates for the Presidency of the Republic. General elections were held in the Republic of Iraq and State of Palestine at the end of last year.

12. Governmental efforts were accompanied by the efforts of major Arab players and parties. Civil society organizations joined forces, as did businessmen's organizations, to strengthen the reform efforts as key support partners in various critical areas, exploiting the ability of civil society to take the initiative and propose new ideas, suggest unique models for confronting problems and options and alternatives for solving them and making good use of the mass-communication capabilities of these organizations. All of this makes Arab civil society well equipped for involvement in important experiments in various areas of development and reform.

Arab society's belief in the role of civil society organizations has increased significantly and the activities of civil society have multiplied and diversified. In a number of places, these have been able to contribute to addressing pressing issues, such as unemployment, illiteracy, health care and environmental protection. As a result, a new, integrated vision of civil society and civil society organizations has formed. It is seen as a parallel entity, working to support government institutions in partnership with the State on the path of development, modernization and growth and striving toward the common goal of the advancement of Arab society.

13. Within this framework, Arab civil society organizations have held a number of meetings in Alexandria, Beirut, Morocco, Bahrain and elsewhere. An important declaration was issued by the conference organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in collaboration with a number of civil society organizations on the Arab world, formulating a vision of Arab reform in the political, social and cultural fields and defining the mechanisms available to civil society organizations to act in support of reform efforts in the region. Arab civil society spoke with a loud and clear voice for the second year in succession at the Second Arab Reform Conference, held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina last year with the theme, "Successful Models". In March this year, prior to the Summit, the Third Arab Reform Conference was held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina with the theme, "Challenges and Concerns Facing the Civil

Society". The goal was to establish best practice and understand the achievements of reform by studying the most successful accomplishments and practices in the Arab States and other parts of the world by discussion of a number of key points relating to microfinance loans and the effect on the empowerment of women, youth employment, transparency, human rights, environmental issues and the relationship of these to reform in the Arab world.

14. In the belief that the democratic process has become a fundamental political necessity and is a dynamic process for the development of those countries adopting it, and in affirmation of its intent to build its own institutional capacity, the League of Arab States regularly undertakes electoral monitoring in and at the request of any of the Arab States, among which the Secretariat-General has acquired a prominent role in the monitoring of presidential and legislative elections. At the request of the Republic of Djibouti, the Secretariat-General took part in the monitoring of presidential elections on 10 April 2005, in the course of which the delegation from the Secretariat-General met with a number of officials from both Government and opposition, representing most of the political currents in Djibouti.

15. In view of the integrity and professionalism of the League of Arab States in this respect, the Secretariat-General has received a number of invitations to participate in electoral monitoring in friendly States outside the region. The mission of the Secretariat-General participated alongside international delegations in monitoring the Ethiopian general elections held on 15 May 2005. The head of the Arab League mission in Moscow was charged with participation in the monitoring of Chechen parliamentary elections on 27 November 2005, alongside some one thousand local and foreign monitors. The Secretariat-General has also received an invitation to participate in the presidential elections to be held in Belarus on 19 March 2006. The head of the Arab League mission in Moscow has been charged with representing the League in these elections.

16. I would like to note that the inauguration of the first session of the Interim Arab Parliament on 27 December 2005 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, in implementation of the resolution of the Algiers Summit (2005), represented a significant event in support of the democratic process in the Arab world. This measure comes in response, too, to the resolution of Arab leaders in the Document of the Covenant, Accord and Solidarity adopted at Tunis (2004), resolving to continue the comprehensive political, economic, social, cultural and educational reform measures in order to achieve sustainable development, cement the solidarity of the Arab people by strengthening the spirit of citizenship and equality, expand participation in public life, encourage means of responsible freedom of expression, protect human rights in accordance with the Arab Charter on Human Rights and international covenants and charters, strive to enhance the role of the Arab woman in building society, in accordance with our beliefs, values and customs and establish the structures and create the conditions necessary to consolidate Arab economic integration, thus enabling us to participate effectively in the global economy and development of human civilization and respond to the demands of modern life, on the basis of mutual understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

17. In addition to monitoring the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States and the measures taken, the League of Arab States regularly presents the Arab viewpoint, on the basis of the declarations of the Tunis and Algiers Summit, at

international assemblies and through communications and meetings with a large number of international officials in many countries, at all levels. The League of Arab States is also concerned that the dialogue between Arab States and civil society organizations and the private sector should be a genuine Arab dialogue that allows reform and development to emerge from a comprehensive Arab strategy.

In implementation of the proposal that the Secretariat-General should act as a depository for data and information on achievements in reform and development, including social and economic development programmes in the areas of health, education, women, political participation, human rights, etc., and thereby provide scope for the exchange of experience among the Arab States, and in order to re-issue such information, circulate it among Member States, publicize it at the level of Arab and international public opinion and submit a report thereon to the Summit, I have requested that Member States supply the Secretariat-General with information on the measures that each has taken in implementation of the declaration. To date, I have received reports from the following Member States since the Tunis Declaration (2004) was issued: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Djibouti, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Lebanese Republic, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. These reports were submitted to the Algiers Summit (2005) and others arriving subsequently were submitted to this Summit in Khartoum as an attachment to document no. R/18 (03/06)12 – views(0130).

18. I directed the Secretariat-General to monitor closely the current process of reform and development in the Arab region and prepare annual follow-up reports. This is the second such report. While anxious to provide a summary on the basis of the reports received from Arab States by the Secretariat-General, we hope to enhance these follow-up reports in the future by making use of information received from civil society and legislative bodies in the Arab world. We will thereby establish a tradition of issuing Arab reports on reform and modernization instead of relying on reports on the situation in the Arab word issued by foreign bodies, often lacking accuracy and objectivity and sometimes released for specific purposes, inconsistent with scientific objectivity and integrity.

There follows a concise review of the achievements at national level in several Arab States, in accordance with information received by the Secretariat-General since the Algiers Summit (March 2005), with the original data enclosed in a separate document.

II. Summary of achievements at national level in Member States since the Algiers Summit (March 2005)

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

19. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan submitted three reports on its efforts in support of development and modernization in a number of cultural, educational, social and judicial fields.

20. The achievement and sustainability of economic growth and political and social development in Jordan depends primarily on the ability of ministries and

government institutions to administer development policies and programmes effectively and soundly. From this starting-point, the Jordanian Government adopted a programme of public sector development for 2004-2009 designed to improve performance of ministries and government institutions and direct them toward medium- and long-term goals. The public sector development programme contains eight key elements, developed within the Government's public sector development policy paper under the heading, "Better Governance, Better Results 2004-2009", adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2004. Responsibility for implementing the key points of the government policy paper belongs to the Ministry of Public Sector Development, in collaboration with other government ministries and institutions.

21. Increasing attention has been given to the higher education sector in recent years, in terms of strategic planning and raising the standard of its institutions and scientific research institutions to the level of their counterparts in the developed countries. This required radical changes in the sector. Jordan now has 10 public universities, including the German-Jordanian University, 13 private universities and 4 new universities have been licensed. A number of academic programmes have been set up in specializations required by the Jordanian and Arab job markets. Other measures have been taken to develop and modernize the higher education and scientific research sector, in keeping with the growing importance of human development as an essential part of Jordan's strategic plan.

22. Jordan has launched the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) project to bring about a qualitative transformation in all parts of the educational process. The Ministry of Education's projects for educational development and innovation represent considerable progress toward the formation of a national education strategy based upon a set of principles designed to enable all children of school age to attend and remain at school, to raise awareness and to build competence, fairness and equality.

23. Economic reform focuses on genuine partnership between the public and private sectors and a number of programmes and initiatives have been adopted to speed up the implementation of economic reform policies and measures in the areas of finance, administration, legislation and the judiciary. The result has been that the national economy achieved growth of 7.5 % in the first three quarters of 2005, while prices remained stable, the volume of foreign trade grew by 22.2% and the poverty level on a country-wide basis fell to 14.2%, compared to 21.3% in 1997.

24. With the aim of achieving the sustainable implementation of national development programmes, believing in working in partnership and building upon past achievement and in implementation of the vision of His Majesty King Abdullah II, the National Agenda was launched in November 2005 to embrace all development efforts under a unified partnership, set specific national goals linked to executive programmes within definite time-frames, accelerate the pace of growth and achieve balanced, sustainable development. The National Agenda's most important axes are political development and partnership, legislation and justice, deepening investment, financial services and government financial reform, boosting employment and vocational training, social welfare, education, higher education, scientific research and creativity, and infrastructure improvement.

25. The Jordanian National Council for Family Affairs seeks to realize a political vision in support of development policy, enabling the Jordanian family to achieve its

aspirations and interact with regional and global changes. In collaboration with its partners from governmental and non-governmental organizations, both local and international, the Council has made a series of achievements in the area of family protection, through its leadership of the national Family Protection Project, established in 2000, and in areas relating to children, where it has developed the National Plan of Action for Children based upon a set of fundamentals represented by the United Nations resolution on "A world fit for children" (2002), the Arab Plan of Action for Children 2004-2015 issued by the 3rd Arab High Level Conference on Children (Tunis, 2005) and the Millennium Goals.

26. Within the framework of the Good Governance Initiative for Development in the Arab Countries, launched officially by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the Dead Sea Conference (6 to 7 February 2005) with support from the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and adopted with its six axes of reform and development, and whereas the partnership in development and modernization of the judiciary and law enforcement between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, France and the United States of America has been approved, in implementation whereof and pursuant to the invitation of the chairman of the steering committee, the Minister of Justice of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Ministers of Justice and representatives of Ministries of Justice of Arab States Party to the initiative for development of the judiciary and law enforcement met in Amman from 28 to 29 September 2005. These States were: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Tunisia, the Socialist People's Republic of Algeria, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Palestine, the State of Qatar, the Lebanese Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen. The meeting was also attended by representatives of UNDP and OECD, in addition to the US and French partners, the League of Arab States, the Arab Lawyers Union and observers from international and regional organizations. The participants agreed upon the importance of an independent and impartial judiciary and the need to strive to reinforce and consolidate this principal. It was also agreed that priority should be given to development of the following themes:

- Ensuring neutrality and impartiality in the judiciary;
- More effective separation between the judiciary and law enforcement.

Participants also agreed to convene the next meeting on this axis in April 2006.

The Kingdom of Bahrain

27. At the beginning of the new millennium, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain began implementation of an ambitious national reform project aimed at the political, economic, social and cultural modernization of Bahrain in the light of the unique characteristics of Bahraini society and its aspirations for the future.

28. The project reviewed the features of Bahrain at the start of the new millennium and determined the nature of the reforms necessary and modernization procedures required to further Bahraini society. This was carried out in considered, practical steps and in gradual manner to enable them to be comprehended by society, and in a manner appropriate to regional and international conditions.

29. In the area of the development of democracy, the National Action Charter was put to a popular referendum in February 2001 and approved by 98.4% of the votes. On this basis, the Constitution of Bahrain was amended in February 2002 to establish a bicameral parliament, one chamber elected and the other appointed. The parliament was given extensive legislative and oversight powers to enable it to perform its role as the legislative authority. The Constitution also approved political rights for women and opened the door to freedom of expression for nationals, as well as freedom to organize politically under the law, in addition to strengthening the independence of judicial institutions. The Constitution and Charter established the country's change to a constitutional monarchy.

30. In May 2002, municipal elections were held with substantial participation of political forces. The elections were characterized by impartiality and transparency, with women granted the right to vote and stand for election in the same manner as men. Regardless of the results of these elections, they represent, in the view of many, a qualitative leap toward bolstering the democratic trend, not only in the Gulf but as model to be followed throughout the Arab region.

31. On 24 October 2002, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa appointed the members of the Consultative Council, enabling the legislature to assume legislative and oversight duties. One of the most significant gains for Bahraini women from the reform project is the appointment of six ladies to the Consultative Council.

32. The economic dimension represents the fulcrum of a comprehensive Bahraini renaissance, given that it is the cornerstone of the national reform project designed to create a suitable climate for sustainable growth in the Kingdom. It takes the form of the establishment of a modern and diversified economic infrastructure capable of facing all internal and external challenges and the forging of balanced economic and commercial relations with various countries in order to attract foreign investment and encourage domestic capital, thus improving the living standards of nationals and increasing prosperity, in the belief that man is the axis of development and its very purpose. In order to create a suitable climate for sustainable development in the Kingdom, the Government has followed a course of regeneration through economic development focusing on reform of the labour market and liberalization of the Bahraini economy.

33. The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has been able to diversify sources of income because of the policies it has followed in previous years. It has been able to reduce dependence on oil by means of a development policy that stimulates other economic sectors. This is clear from the report on gross domestic product.

34. Bahrain has taken a number of measures in implementation of its economic policy, including establishing the Economic Development Council and offering a series of incentives to investors, of which the principal ones are the absence of taxes on income and company profits, the lack of control or restriction on transfers of capital or profits and the exemption of machinery, equipment and raw materials from customs duty.

35. Bahrain has followed a clear security strategy that includes the maintenance of security and stability to protect the process of comprehensive development in the country. The concept of the agencies responsible for security and stability in the Kingdom has changed and the notion of security is no longer limited to the

traditional role of the police as combating and protecting the country against crime and striving to maintain security and stability for the nation and nationals. The notion has now widened to include social and humanitarian duties, as well as the important role these agencies play in strengthening security and stability and combating the effects of international terrorism on the success of development plans.

36. Work, training and manpower development are included among the fundamental areas of development. Achievements in this area have drawn inspiration from and are the application of the spirit of article 5, paragraph (c) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, requiring that the State guarantees nationals proper social insurance for old age, sickness, invalidity, unemployment or being orphaned or widowed. The State also guarantees social security and health care services and strives to relieve nationals from ignorance, anxiety and penury. Article 13 of the Constitution stipulates that all nationals have a duty to work, as a requirement of self-respect and the public good. Every citizen has the right to work and to choose what kind of work, in accordance with public order and decency. It likewise stipulates that the State guarantees to provide job opportunities for nationals and fair terms of work.

37. The achievements and developments in this area are divided into two main groups:

- Group 1: achievements and developments in the labour sector, including amendment of the Labour Law for the Private Sector, the unemployment insurance programme, promulgation of the Workers Trade Union Law, the National Employment Project, sponsored by His Majesty the King and based upon his idea after studying the problem of unemployment in Bahrain;
- Group 2: achievements and developments in training and manpower development namely, the restructuring of training affairs, the drafting of a separate law for training and human resource development, the drawing up of national plans and programmes for training, employment and professional guidance for all categories of manpower by level, the organization of conferences, forums and workshops, the establishment of specialized fairs to benefit from the local and foreign experience, the ongoing development of funding schemes for training and the creation of a number of organizations, councils and committees to implement the policy, plans and programmes determined by the High Council for Vocational Training.

The Republic of Tunisia

38. In its report, the delegation of the Republic of Tunisia advised that Tunisia has taken a series of measures and resolutions covering the areas of politics, the economy, social affairs and culture, designed to advance the course of growth, development and modernization.

39. In the political and media field, a number of measures were taken in the course of 2005 to continue strengthening the course of democracy, improve human rights and consolidate the plurality that has become a tangible reality on the Tunisian scene. The most important of these measures are:

- Bolstering the legislative system with the creation of a second chamber, the Chamber of Councillors, inaugurated in August 2005;

- Speeding up of decisions in legal cases and the development of alternative measures of punishment;
- Bolstering the reform of regional councils and improving oversight;
- Enhancing the role of women in public life, whereby the representation of women on municipal councils following the 2005 elections was 27.44%, compared to 21% during the previous session;
- Approving new subsidies to support newspapers published by political parties and strengthen their role in building free and democratic civil institutions;
- Charging the Chairman of the Higher Committee on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to receive proposals from political parties and other civil society elements;
- Creating the National Election Observatory;
- Enhancing the special initiative on radio and television with the creation of the first private television station (Hannibal TV) and second private radio station (Radio Jawhara);
- Announcing, on the National Day of Culture, the abolition of the legal deposit procedure for newspapers.

40. In the area of the economy, the report shows that, despite difficulties resulting from an unfavourable global economic situation, the Tunisian economy remained resilient. Export growth was 14% in 2005 and the economy was able to sustain a rate of growth 6% above that of the world economy. This was achieved by putting in place a strategic plan for the agricultural sector, revision of the legal framework of agricultural insurance, the creation of a higher committee for major projects, reliance on businessmen and investors to double national efforts to attract foreign investment, the creation of a bank to finance small and medium-size enterprises, as well as other legislation and projects to serve economic development in Tunisia.

41. In the area of social affairs, Tunisian policy is a blend of the economic and social dimensions. A powerful boost was given to social policy in 2005, particularly in the areas of labour, social insurance, support for poor areas and social groups, care for the elderly and handicapped, eradication of illiteracy, spread of education, bolstering of health services and promotion of the social housing sector.

42. As regards the cultural dimension, Tunisia has been concerned to achieve a balance between the fundamental, fixed values of civilization and the changes and challenges imposed by globalization.

The Republic of the Sudan

43. The report from the delegation of the Republic of the Sudan stated that the Sudan has made substantial progress in the humanitarian field. Voluntary work in the Sudan has been accorded great importance, giving substance to the notions of social solidarity and cooperation, particularly through rapid intervention to contain and relieve the effects of natural and economic disasters and crises. In this respect, one of the most significant achievements has been the establishment, under Act 24 (2002), of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs to assume, in collaboration with other organizations, leadership and coordination of humanitarian work and its

development to enable containment of the effects of major disasters that will certainly become more complex in the coming phase, in view of the peace.

44. There are 24 associations and organizations working in the area of human rights with a department, the Peace and Human Rights Department, to steer this work, in full cooperation with international and local organizations working in this area. It is concerned with the rights of women and children, combating harmful customs and the support and rehabilitation of war invalids. Some 317 organizations are working in various areas of social development, lead by the Reconstruction and Development Department of the Humanitarian Aid Commission. There are some 1194 civil society organizations, associations and charities working in various humanitarian fields. The National and International Organizations Department is responsible for organizing and supervising their activities and associated migration and registration procedures.

45. The effects of several economic initiatives in the Sudan were felt during the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium in several areas, including fiscal performance, monetary performance, basic reporting, the banking sector, the country's foreign currency reserves, the private and public sectors, regional cooperation, accession to the WTO and external openness. The report stated that the economy has recorded a total estimated real growth rate of some 7.2% and GDP at current rates of exchange is approximately US$ 19.5 billion. However, this growth has become more dependent upon direct foreign investments, which represent some 7.5% of GDP, and oil exports, representing about 16% of GDP.

46. In banking, the Comprehensive Banking Policy (1999-2002) was applied. This was aimed at developing aspects of the banking system and liquidity management, regulating the foreign currency market and introducing banking technology; to implement this, specific yearly action programmes were put in place. The size of the foreign currency reserves increased during the 1990s and beginning of the third millennium, reaching US$ 134.9 million in 2000 and rising to US$ 1,323.9 million in 2004.

47. The Sudan has continued its efforts in the area of regional cooperation and it has acceded to the WTO. It is noticeable that the degree of external openness started to increase after oil exports commenced, reaching approximately 35% in 2004, compared with 32% in 2003. However, it is low in comparison with several Middle Eastern States that depend upon oil exports and emerging Asian countries that rely upon the export of industrial and information technology products.

The report concludes that the economic environment has improved, particularly after the appearance of oil and cessation of the war in the South. This has been accompanied by a substantial increase in production, particularly industrial production, international trade and the flow of international investment.

The Syrian Arab Republic

48. The Secretariat-General received a number of memoranda from the Permanent Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic on development and modernization efforts in various areas of the economy, social affairs, health etc. Regarding economic reform and economic development programmes, the memorandum advised that, since 2000, the pace of economic reform has increased due to a policy of legislative reform and modernization and external openness to meet the needs of the population

and economic development on the one hand, and to facilitate matters for Arab and foreign investors, both individual and company, on the other.

49. During the last three decades, the political leadership has given attention and support to women's emancipation and empowering women to participate in public life in Syria. Constitutional and legislative formulae and the political and social climate have created the objective conditions and foundations for the emancipation of the Syrian Arab woman and her participation in the building and development of society.

50. The Syrian Arab Republic's attention to woman is not restricted to guaranteeing her rights as stated in the Constitution, the law and development plans but goes further to include ratification of all international conventions that ensure women's rights, the most recent of which is the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and membership of the Arab Women Organization. The concern of the State to achieve gender equality is reflected in the public budget that seeks to achieve this goal by allocating approvals for the Syrian Women's Federation on top of its own revenues, as well as allocations for women's units in several organizations and for the Arab Women Organization.

51. Given that the human being is the goal and tool of development, all plans have targeted the improvement of the position of women, incorporating women's issues in the policies followed in development plans, and developing the capacity and skills of women to enable them to play an active and effective role in all aspects of life. In its general goals, the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) affirmed the activation of women's role in the family and society.

52. Significant steps have been taken to advance the course of economic, financial and legislative reform in the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria's current economic orientation is toward an open and competitive economy in which the State plays a fundamental role, particularly in the transitional phase. This role involves the hands-on steering of the transition in a manner consistent with circumstances and conditions. The Syrian economy is moving toward a market economy, with the aim of improving the living standards of citizens and redistribution of national income. Syria has drawn up an economic reform programme with a timetable for implementation between 2004 and 2010. Reform in Syria is proceeding within an integrated action programme designed to create a modern financial and banking system and a fiscal policy in keeping with market requirements, permitting better management of available financial resources, effective participation in economic policy reform and greater stability and prosperity.

53. Significant steps have been taken to advance the course of reform in the areas of health care, children, youth and women in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Ministry of Health has established 42 different health programmes, with supervision and funding from international health organizations. These programmes are concerned with the development of public health, protecting the health of children, mothers and expectant mothers, the eradication of contagious diseases and striving to provide all the means for applying a system of comprehensive health insurance, currently being drafted with the assistance of a number of international bodies, particularly the European Union, following Syria's efforts to provide adequate health institutions and qualified, specialized medical staff.

54. The course of modernization and reform in Syria is progressing through the definition of strategic priorities within an extensive programme of political, administrative, economic, educational, cultural and media reform designed to approximate to the level of modernity in the developed countries, transfer modern management thinking and culture, set priorities for problems that need to be addressed, combat the economic, social and moral dimensions of corruption and create an effective, developed, administrative system to provide the conditions for growth and prosperity. To achieve these goals, a number of laws and statutes were promulgated in the course of 2005 in various areas including, finance, labour and state planning, transport, the economy, higher education, internal affairs, trade, local government and other areas, contributing to furthering the progress of development and modernization in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Republic of Iraq

55. According to the report from the Iraqi delegation, Iraq has recently witnessed three significant events:

56. The putting of the new draft Constitution to a referendum of the entire Iraqi people on 15 October 2005.

57. The holding in Cairo of the preparatory meeting for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord from 19 to 21 November 2005, at the invitation of the League of Arab States and with the participation of Iraqi political forces and parties representing different elements of the Iraqi people, in preparation for the convening of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord in Baghdad.

The general elections held on 15 December 2005, with wide participation from all political groups and persuasions representing the Iraqi people strengthened and consolidated the principle of applied democracy and expansion of political participation.

The Sultanate of Oman

58. In the report we received, the Sultanate of Oman focused on economic developments and modernization. The Sultanate's economic policy is based on a market economy system concentrating on the private sector, free competition, the encourage of private enterprise, free trade and the free transfer of goods, services and capital. The Sultanate adopts a concept of development that links the economic and social dimensions to provide Omanis, as the means and goal of development, with basic needs.

59. In implementation of a strategy of economic diversification, the Sultanate has made great strides in development of the gas and tourism sectors and increased the contribution of these to the national economy.

60. The Sultanate has paid special attention to the privatization programme, reducing substantially the link between the national economy and public expenditure, raising the level of productivity, increasing the contribution of the private sector to GDP, providing a competitive environment and raising the efficiency of the economy. In affirmation of Government policy to encourage and develop the privatization programme, the Privatization Law, amended by Royal Decree No. 77/2004, was promulgated to serve the goals of sustainable development and Royal Decree No. 78/2004 promulgating the Law Regulating and Privatizing

the Electricity Sector and Related Water Sector. A feasibility study is currently being conducted into the privatization of various services, such as the postal service.

61. Given the Government of the Sultanate's concern with the development of human resources as the means and goal of development, a number of measures have been taken to regulate the labour market and designed to provide more job opportunities for nationals.

62. The Sultanate has also taken a series of significant measures to prepare the way for the gradual transformation of the Omani economy to a knowledge economy. In line with this approach, the Government has embraced an E-government programme; projects related to this and the Sultanate's digital society initiative include, a unified E-government data and information network, smart ID cards for nationals and residents (Directorate General of Civil Status) and a web site for government tenders and other projects.

63. The Sultanate has also striven to link the Omani economy with the global economy and, in this context, has relied upon "Vision 2020: an Overview of Oman's Economic Future", a set of specific policies to promote the free flow of goods and services, encourage direct foreign investment and technology transfer and support policies designed to strengthen and increase the efficiency of the Omani economy and exploit the potential and resources offered by integration in the global economy.

The State of Qatar

64. The State of Qatar has taken a number of political, economic and social measures. On the political front, 13 July 1999 marked a new phase in the modern history of the State of Qatar when His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani promulgated Amiri Decree No. 11/1999 on the formation of the Permanent Constitution Drafting Committee and expansion of the base of popular participation by the establishment of an elected representative assembly. His Highness defined the basic features of the anticipated Qatari Constitution as being necessarily based upon a Gulf, Arab and Islamic identity, authentic Arab traditions and the principles of the religion of Islam. In 2002, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani was presented with the draft Permanent Constitution, which secures the basic pillars of society, regulates the powers of the State, gives concrete form to popular participation and guarantees the rights and freedoms of the population. The Constitution received a 96.9% approval in the popular referendum of 29 April 2003.

65. As regards the judiciary, article 129 of the Constitution stipulates that the rule of law is the basis of governance in the State, that the honour of the judiciary and the impartiality and probity of judges are the guarantee of rights and freedoms and that the judiciary in the State of Qatar shall be independent, impartial and just.

66. These political achievements were accompanied by achievements on all fronts. On the economic front, the Qatari economy is reckoned to be one of the fastest growing in the world, with an average annual growth rate of 18.9% in the five year period from 2000 to 2004. Growth is expected to reach a new high in 2005 of 25%. It should be pointed out that the rate of inflation was very low, fluctuating between 1.7% and 2.26% in 2000-2003 and, despite a marked rise to 6.8% in 2004 and 5.6% in the first half of 2005, remains within acceptable economic parameters given the successive leaps in GDP.

The report made clear that the large increase in oil prices in 2004-2005 provided the liquidity necessary for development in non-oil sectors, which have grown by 14.8%.

67. The State of Qatar has been concerned with all aspects of social development. The pace of educational development has increased to encompass all population centres in the country, both sexes and all stages of education up to university level. The Government launched an initiative designed to develop public education in the State of Qatar under the slogan, "Education for a New Era". This aims to provide better means of education to the population to enable them to adapt to the demands of economic and social development. Qatar has also been concerned with culture, sport, youth welfare and the media and qualitative achievements have been made in these areas.

68. In health, the National Health Authority, established in 2005, provides preventive and treatment services and supervises the provision of public health services at home and the medical treatment of Qatari nationals abroad, under the supervision of the Hamad Medical Corporation, unique in the Arabian Gulf region. The private health sector makes an effective contribution to the provision of medical services.

69. The State of Qatar seeks to provide the highest level of social welfare services to its people and apply the Social Security Law, which stipulates the payment of monthly allowances to widows, divorcees, orphans, needy families, those with special needs, the elderly and bereaved families, in addition to those unable to work. In accordance with the law regulating private societies and organizations, private organizations play a role in the provision of charitable and social services in cooperation with Government ministries and departments, relying on donations from individuals and the private sector.

The State of Kuwait

70. The report received by the Secretariat-General reviewed the most significant achievements and reforms of development and modernization in the State of Kuwait. Domestic policy plays an important part in affirming the values of participation, transparency, accountability and oversight in Kuwaiti society. The level of participation in legislative elections has increased, reaching approximately 81% at the last parliamentary elections on 4 July 2003. Kuwaiti civil society plays an important role in enriching political life and participating in decision-making. The Kuwaiti Constitution stipulates freedom of expression, freedom of scientific research and the freedom of everyone to express his will orally, in writing or in any other form and affirms the protection of human rights.

71. At the same time, Kuwaiti foreign policy plays an active role in conveying the national viewpoint to the world, defending the interests of the State, maintaining the independence of Kuwait, affirming and giving form to its affiliation with the Arab and Islamic nations, strengthening joint Gulf and Arab cooperation, promoting economic aspects in the foreign policy of the State, affirming the authoritative role of the United Nations system in maintaining international peace and security, while strengthening the role of other international and regional organizations, opening channels of political and economic cooperation at international and regional level and coordinating issues of joint concern in the era of globalization and rapid and momentous global and regional transformation.

72. In the area of sustainable human development, the Kuwaiti has, for decades, been considered the goal and axis of the State's development efforts. Human development in the State of Kuwait has made palpable achievements in many areas, with indicators coming close to those in the developed countries. This includes population issues, where policy is linked to and interwoven with social, economic, cultural and security policy. At the same time, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive, strategic vision to address population issues in the State and link these to sustainable development in quality of life and issues related to labour. The Kuwaiti labour market is facing many challenges, including those related to the increasing size of the non-national labour force which, in 2004, was some 81% of the total workforce of the country, while the national workforce represented 18.74%. The State is upgrading the national workforce to play its anticipated role in the development process.

73. In the area of health, the State plays a crucial role in the provision and integration of free health services to nationals. The Ministry of Health provides between 80% and 90% of health services in Kuwait at three levels (primary, secondary and tertiary), including integrated preventive, treatment and rehabilitation services. Public health expenditure rose from KD 281.2 million in 1999 to KD 309.9 million in 2004. Alongside the role of the Government, private health services and health services provided by the oil sector, military sector and non-governmental organizations are active.

74. In social security and social welfare, the State of Kuwait is considered to be a high-income country, with an average per capita income above that of most developed European countries. This, however, does not mean that there are no sections of Kuwaiti society with incomes below the poverty level or with limited incomes by national standards. Accordingly, Kuwaiti has, since the 1960s, embarked upon creating a legislative framework and institutional structure to protect these sections. The social security and social services network in the State of Kuwait is based upon the following: the social insurance system, the social welfare system, the social benefits system, care for the handicapped and the elderly, extensive provision for the family, motherhood and the child, the system of social development and the housing welfare system for nationals.

75. Kuwait has devoted considerable attention to reform and development in the area of education. Education is a free, constitutional right and the State supervises all educational services at all levels, including public higher education, available free to all Kuwaiti nationals under the Law of Compulsory Education (1995) and the Law Regulating Higher Education (1966). The percentage of Kuwaitis who have received a university education is high, with 77% of Kuwaiti males and 12.4% of females having received a basic university education as at December 2003.

76. Regarding economic reform and development, the report speaks frankly about the challenges the State is working to address. The pattern of development followed in the past, which relied upon fiscal plenty, revealed a series of structural, economic defects that became aggravated over time until they formed obstacles to development. Public expenditure swelled as a result of expansion of the welfare state, particularly in respect of the employment of nationals and provision of free public services, and current expenditure rose at the expense of capital expenditure levels.

77. The rentier nature of the economy became entrenched due to the dependence upon oil as the principle source of income and financing of non-oil activity, and the relative fragility of industrial production. Accordingly, the domestic economy continued to be dominated by the public sector. This was combined with an inflated administrative system with increased and overlapping responsibilities at the same time as a weak private sector continued to be sidelined in the economic development process. This led the Government to adopt a programme of economic reform designed to address the accumulated economic deficiencies and their effects, as well as initiate the stage of economic development and renewal.

78. This programme relied upon developing the philosophy and mechanisms of growth. The Higher Council for Planning and Development was created in 2004 to define long-term development goals, reorganize planning and development in Kuwait and link and integrate the agencies responsible for reform and economic development. This was accompanied by development of the procedures and methods of national planning and a comprehensive development of public administration.

79. The economic reform programme relies upon the development of economic performance by rationalizing the role of the state in the economy, strengthening the role of the oil sector in economic development and opening up new horizons for Gulf and international economic cooperation. It also relies upon fiscal reform, reinforcing the development role of the public treasury and building an information and knowledge society to support the new economy.

The Arab Republic of Egypt

80. The Arab Republic of Egypt has witnessed significant progress in the development of its political institutions and legislation, aimed at deepening democratic practice and moving to a new stage of domestic politics consistent with the cultural, social and economic developments in Egyptian society and in line with the general development in global political thinking, particularly in the areas of democracy, freedoms and human rights. This progress has included the following:

81. Change in the method of electing the President of the Republic: On 26 February 2005, President Mubarak launched an initiative that included a request to the People's Assembly and Consultative Assembly to study and amend article 76 of the Constitution to allow for election of the President of the Republic by direct, secret, public ballot, instead of a general referendum on one candidate. The initiative also included ten principles, representing an integrated programme for the political, economic and social dimensions of national action in the coming phase.

82. Amendment of the Constitution: The change in the method of electing the President of the Republic opened the door to a general political debate in Egypt that continued for a number of months. The subject was discussed in the People's Assembly and Consultative Assembly and the text of the constitutional amendment was drafted and put to a popular referendum on 25 May 2005.

83. Presidential elections law: On 2 July 2005, Law No. 174 (2005) on the Organization of Presidential Elections was promulgated.

84. Amendment of the law regulating the exercise of human rights by promulgation of Law No. 173 (2005) amending several of the provisions of Law No. 73 (1956) and requiring the addition of a new section thereto, creating a Higher Election Commission, including the right to elect the President of the Republic

among the political rights of all Egyptian citizens aged 18 and over and establishing the Law as a new system of legal protection for the proper practice of human rights.

In application of this amendment and in compliance with the terms of the Constitution and the presidential elections law, the first presidential elections in Egypt were held on 7 September 2005. The Higher Election Committee was formed to oversee all stages of the elections, in which ten candidates, representing ten Egyptian parties, competed. The elections resulted in victory for President Muhammed Hosni Mubarak.

85. The amendment of the Law on the People's Assembly by Law No. 175 (2005) was designed, firstly, to develop the provisions of the Law on the People's Assembly to support and reinforce the exercise of democracy by the people in order to ensure the true expression of the will of citizens and, secondly, to revise the provisions of the Law on the People's Assembly.

86. The amendment of the Law on the Consultative Assembly by Law No. 176 (2005), amending several provisions of Law No. 120 (1980) on the Consultative Assembly to include the method of holding by-elections for the Assembly and certain conditions to be satisfied by candidates.

87. Amendment of the Law on Political Parties by promulgation in July 2005 of Law No. 177 (2005) amending several provisions of Law No. 40 (1977) on Political Parties, including amendments on the conditions for the founding and continuity of political parties.

88. On the basis of these significant deepening of democratic practice in Egypt, a new phase has begun whereby candidature for the Presidency of the Republic has been opened to party and independent candidates. Presidential elections were held in September 2005 with multiple candidates and parliamentary elections were held in three stages during November and December 2005.

89. The report concluded that, despite the flaws, excesses and acts of violence and disruption that marred the legislative elections and that need to be examined, as does the abstention of a majority of electors, in general the elections revealed the existence of a process of genuine democratic change in Egypt. Government, parliament, parties, civil society and the people must work together to deepen and enrich the democratic process in Egypt.

The Kingdom of Morocco

90. The Kingdom of Morocco submitted a number of reports on its efforts in support of development and modernization. In a speech to the Moroccan people on 18 May 2005, His Majesty King Mohammed VI launched the National Initiative for Human Development as a new element to further the process of development in Morocco.

91. The Initiative relies upon four pillars namely, objective data on social problems in Morocco; social rehabilitation through integrated, public policies; openness to a world that is experiencing rapid transformations, while engaging in social action to protect the gains from openness from its negative repercussions; and, finally, proceeding on the basis of the lessons learned from previous Moroccan experiments and successful models from other countries in combating poverty and exclusion. In the first phase of its launch, the initiative will target 360 of the most

deprived rural areas and 250 poor urban areas for gradual social upgrade. His Majesty defined the responsibility of the commitment to achieve this in three stages. In the short term, the Prime Minister has been charged with the drafting of an integrated action plan within three months to give shape to the first phase of the Initiative. In the medium term, the political class will develop concrete projects to give substance to the Initiative prior to the 2007 elections. In the long term, the aim is to raise human development indicators in the Kingdom of Morocco to the level of those in the developed countries.

His Majesty concluded by stating that the National Initiative for Human Development is not an interim project or cosmetic programme but an ongoing work. His Majesty set a three-year time frame for evaluation of the results of the new initiative and the positive and tangible change it effects in the lives of Moroccans.

92. Within this framework, Morocco submitted a summary of the human development achievements in the country under the title, "50 Years of Human Development: Perspectives to 2025", containing a retrospective assessment of the progress of human development in Morocco since independence and a review of the perspectives for the next 20 years. It represents a body of knowledge, supported by evidence and arguments to feed the debate, draws lessons from the country's experience and proposes several ways for thinking about the next two decades, relying upon a national contribution animated by the national spirit and respect for objectivity.

93. To consolidate human rights, Morocco established the Justice and Reconciliation Commission, charged with studying and resolving cases of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention in the country since independence in 1956 until 1999. In establishing this Commission, the aim was to consolidate gains and resolve in a just manner all non-judicial cases of gross violations of human rights in the past. The intention is to bandage the wounds of the past and repair the damage, uncover the truth, draw lessons, reconcile Moroccans with their history and each other and liberate their energies. This will be done by conducting investigations, receiving testimony, determining the type and scale of past violations, continuing to investigate cases of forced disappearance where the fate of the victim remains unknown and determining the responsibility of agencies of State. The Commission will also determine material and moral compensation and strive to develop and enrich a culture and conduct of dialogue to secure the foundations of reconciliation and bolster the democratic transformation.

94. A law pertaining to the Commission was promulgated, requiring all State authorities and agencies to cooperate with the Commission and provide it with full information. It provides for the financial and administrative independence of the Commission. To ensure the participation of all sectors of society, the Commission has put in place a plan for contacting victims, their relatives, the media and civil society.

95. The Commission submitted a report with a number of proposals on institutional reform, a national strategy to prevent evasion from punishment and mechanisms for implementing its recommendations to ensure that the abuses of the past are not repeated and to consolidate the series of current reforms.

96. Within the same framework, the Office of the Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Morocco has an active role in the public sector and in energizing the new concept of

governance. The duties of the Ombudsman consist in developing communication and closing the gap between citizens and the administration, ensuring that the administration observes the rules of law and of justice, and providing for the expectations of citizens when dealing with the bureaucracy. The institution, organization and competence of the Ombudsman are derived from the tenets of general law and comparative law and its role finds expression in the raising of complaints by means of proposals and recommendations to ensure that the truth will prevail and contributing to improvement of the conduct of the bureaucracy in the service of the people.

97. Through the Family Status Code, approved unanimously by parliament, Morocco has provided for the position and protected the rights of women, children and the family. The Family Status Code has introduced "family jurisdiction" sections in Moroccan courts and led to the adoption of a modern framework that raises woman to the status of full partner of the man. Women's rights have been amended in respect of responsibility for and custody of children and equality in respect of rights, duties, responsibilities and authority within marriage, divorce has been reformed and restrictions placed on polygamy, outlawing it save in exceptional circumstances.

98. The development and modernization of the audio-visual sector is an achievement that affects all sectors. The Supreme Broadcasting Authority was established to end the State monopoly of radio and television, consolidate the values of freedom, plurality, modernity, openness, respect for human rights and preservation of human dignity and to advance Morocco politically, economically, socially and culturally. The law relating to audio-visual communication came into force on 7 January 2001, in affirmation of the principle of freedom of communication and to upgrade the audio-visual communication sector to face the challenges of media competition.

99. In its modernization programme, the Kingdom of Morocco is concerned with all aspects of life that are of consequence to people, chief among these being reform of religious affairs. The Ministry of Mortmain Endowments and Islamic Affairs has been restructured, the Supreme Council of Religious Scholars reorganized and the Institution of the alms-tax and organization of places of Muslim worship has been created. The Ministry of Mortmain Endowments and Islamic Affairs has defined the "book" of responsibilities and competencies of the Ministry's functionaries, representing a new turning point by activating mechanisms for organizing religious affairs that depend upon the functionary's knowledge of his environment.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania

100. Following the corrective measure of 3 August 2005 in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Secretariat-General received a memorandum from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania enclosing the first statement of the Military Council for Justice and Democracy on the reforms it intends to carry out in the interim phase. These are as follows:

101. The determination to secure the bases of the new regime and move toward a better future in which all sections of the Mauritanian people, political parties and civil society organization will participate in constructing, in an atmosphere of justice, equality, democracy and transparency.

102. To maintain the Constitution of 20 July 1991, with the exception of the provisions relating to the exercise of legislative authority, which shall be vested in the Military Council until general elections are organized; several other articles shall be revised by means of a supplementary Constitutional Charter, in keeping with the demands of regulating civil authority within the interim phase, to arrive at conditions favourable to the exercise of genuine democracy within not more than two years.

103. The organization of a popular referendum within one year on the amendment of three articles only of the Constitution relating to the periods and numbers of presidential terms and article 104, which was added after the Constitution was ratified.

104. The organization of general elections within not more than 24 months and in which the President and members of the governing Military Council and Interim Government may not stand for election.

105. The guarantee of justice for all citizens in order to ensure fair and just distribution of public sector services to protect the rights of citizens. To this end, a ministerial committee responsible for the drafting of an integrated paper for reform of the judiciary has been set up.

106. The creation of an independent committee with a mandate to oversee the general elections, which shall be open to observers from international organizations and states wishing to monitor the course of the electoral process.

107. As regards good governance, the fight against corruption and maladministration shall be prosecuted with full rigour and resolve to extend respect for institutions and subject government spending to the dictates of the public interest.

Cairo, 16 March 2006

Annex 3
Vol. 2

Report of the Secretary-General on Follow-up of the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States (Vol. 2)

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I. Introduction

1. The statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States of the Tunis Summit (2004) is a unique document, defining the features of the region's future and a springboard for the mechanisms to speed up the process of development, modernization and reform.

2. This approach by the Arab Summit has placed the vision of modernization and development within its proper framework. Despite containing a number of proposals for reform, there have been failings in several aspects of the strategic vision of initiatives originating abroad and their assumptions have been flawed by external motives and interests. They were launched, first and foremost, as an expression of a security vision which holds that the drive toward reform and democracy in the region is one of the major factors in eradicating the terrorism visited upon Europe and the United States from countries defined in the West under the term, "the Wider Middle East". There is no doubt that the confusion that has gripped the international community since the events of 1 September 2001 with all its repercussions and the hold of the so-called war on terror over international priorities has driven a number of states active at international level to explore new policies and mechanisms to confront the dangers of what they call foreign terrorism. This has been fed by international forces keen to raise the level of the campaign against the Arab and Islamic States.

3. Such initiatives have advanced democracy and political plurality as the magic solution to all the problems of the region. While democracy in, indeed, a basic political necessity and a dynamic for development of the societies adopting it, reform must, at the same time, confront economic, social and political problems without being limited to ready-made prescriptions. Awareness of the depth of the problems, that there is no one magic solution and that the process of building and modernizing development and political structures is an ongoing, complicated and comprehensive process, is something that has to be acknowledged frankly by the Arabs, who must be clear about its dimensions and open up a dialogue.

4. While the Arab States have dealt wisely with these external calls and initiatives, the Summit has realised the importance of placing the issue of reform within a methodological framework that takes into fundamental account the interests of the Arab States and places the Arab citizen at the heart of its concerns. The Summit affirms that development and modernization are a priority that the Arab States are striving to deepen, widen and cooperate to achieve at national, Arab and international levels. The bases of this vision are as follows:

- Development and modernization are a pan-Arab issue arising from within the region and an expression of the assured and legitimate ambition of the Arab citizen for a better future. They are an end in themselves and not simply tools or mechanisms of the war on terror. Indeed, they are a practical philosophy that endeavours to serve the citizen, advance development and widen the bases of participation in various political, social and economic areas.
- Reform and development began some time ago and must continue; they are not a tactic or emergency response.
- This track deals with two sets of characteristics: the first of these is a regional, pan-Arab characteristic taking into account Arab culture and identity, which do not conflict with development and modernization. The

second are national characteristics taking into account national identities, different stages of development, accomplishment and growth achieved by each country; these, too, do not conflict with progress and reform.

- The Summit saw fit to draw the attention of all parties to the organic relationship between reform and development on the one hand, and provision of security and stability on the other, and that achieving the sustainable development and real stability that provide the essential foundations for reform in the region require settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute on a lasting, comprehensive and just basis.
- The Summit affirmed that the Arab States are open to the world and interact with world events. Accordingly, they do not oppose dialogue with international forces to benefit from their experience in development and modernization. On the contrary, they welcome initiatives and approaches in support of their efforts. Within the framework of this vision, the Arab States were keen to accept dialogue with the Group of Eight (G8 countries) and establish bases for partnership in support of these ideas. The document on the Status of Development and Modernization affirmed this concept, when it stipulated cooperation with the international community in the framework of mutual partnership and on the basis of joint interests.

5. An extensive series of meetings and conferences on reform in the region have been held with international participation. The documents and declarations of all these gatherings have affirmed that they see in the statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States a genuine expression of the vision emanating from the region designed to meet the needs of the Arab citizen, build his capacities and realize his aspirations for a better future. Various international bodies have considered this statement as the principal authority on which to build any real process of development and modernization in the region.

6. Accordingly, the G8 Summit meeting on 9 June 2004 (attended by a number of Arab States) issued a statement on the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa and welcomed the statement on development and modernization issued by the Tunis Summit. The G8 Summit affirmed that genuine reform cannot be imposed from the outside but must emanate from inside the region. It likewise affirmed that its support for the movement for reform in the region goes side by side with its continuing support for a lasting, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the common vision of the establishment of a viable, democratic and sovereign Palestinian State. The Summit announced the establishment of the "Forum for the Future" as a central mechanism of the partnership process with the States of the Middle East and North Africa.

7. Although there are still question marks over the geographic framework of the partnership defined by the G8 Summit, which included other states as well as the Arab States in what it termed the "Wider Middle East", the Arab States have not tarried over this point lest it be used to accuse them of obstructing the dialogue and joint consultation, particularly as the G8 countries have adopted, with a group of Arab States, as series of diverse programmes in support of reform and development efforts in various spheres.

8. The Kingdom of Morocco hosted the first session of the Forum for the Future on 11 December 2004 in Rabat, in which I participated. A ministerial declaration was issued dealing with the political, economic and social dimensions of reform and affirming the continued support for a lasting, comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict with the aim of establishing a Palestinian State beside Israel. The declaration also dealt with the important role played by organizations of businessmen and civil society in support of the reform process and adopted a number of development and educational projects designed to raise the efficiency and level of different development sectors. The Kingdom of Bahrain announced it would host the second Forum for the Future in 2005.

9. The Arab Republic of Egypt called for a special conference at the beginning of 2005 of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the States of the League of Arab States and the G8 States to place the dialogue between these States upon a sound footing and to affirm that the Arab States have their own regional order, cultural characteristics and regional circumstances. Preparations for this conference were advanced but it was postponed until after the Algiers Summit.

10. From 6 to 7 February 2005, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosted a conference at the Dead Sea to launch an initiative on "Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries". This initiative is designed to reform administrative, financial and judicial institutions in the Arab States with the aim of providing oversight and transparency for the Arab citizen, combating corruption and providing high-level quality. The initiative has a national dimension, to be implemented in each country, and a regional dimension represented by coordination, exchange of experience and integration of information through working along six axes, each one of which an Arab State shall assume responsibility for: civil service and integrity (Kingdom of Morocco), the role of the judiciary and law enforcement (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), e-government, administrative simplification and regulatory reform (United Arab Emirates), the role of civil society and the media in public sector reform (Lebanese Republic), the management of public finances (Arab Republic of Egypt) and public service delivery (Republic of Tunisia). The conference issued a statement welcoming the participation of the Arab League and its specialized agencies in the proceedings in achievement of the aims of the statement issued by the 16th Arab summit (Tunis, 2004).

11. The efforts of Arab Governments have not been limited to the axis of regional activity and initiatives and programmes proposed and adopted in these conferences. A number of Arab States have had varying degrees of success at national level in deepening democracy, widening participation, developing elections, human rights, empowerment of women and expanding the scope of freedoms. These achievements were carried out using a variety of measures, including development of the necessary laws and legislation, constitutional reforms, opening the door to civil society and the creation of various mechanisms to promote human rights. A number of states have likewise made tangible progress in development of the rights of women in the context of equality among citizens. Several states have set up ministries or national councils for human rights, while others have widened the powers and independence of civil society organizations and developed legislation in support of freedoms.

12. After the release of the Summit statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States, I believed it my duty to introduce it on the

international arena, in support of the initiative of the Summit Presidency and all Arab States. I sent letters to the secretaries-general and heads of international and regional organizations, explaining the substance of the statement and the text was lodged with the United Nations, the European Union, the Commission of the African Union, the Organization of American States and Association of Southeast Asian Nations. I continued to clarify the Arab viewpoint on the basis of this statement through contacts and meetings with a large number of international officials at all levels in many countries and by participation in forums on the process of reform, development and modernization. During the first ministerial meeting of the Follow-up and Action Committee I proposed, in the context of the creation of a pan-Arab mechanism to monitor implementation of the statement, that the Secretariat-General of the League act as a library in which to collate the achievements of Arab States so that progress reports might be submitted to the Summit.

On this basis, I sent letters to Arab Foreign Ministers requesting that the Secretariat-General be supplied with the necessary information on the steps taken by each State to implement the declaration. To date, I have received reports from ten States: the Republic of Tunisia, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Djibouti, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Iraq, the Lebanese Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen. These reports have been submitted to the Summit as an annex. These reports do not represent all the achievements in the Arab region and there are other significant achievements we are monitoring in the Arab States that are fully in keeping with the accelerating pace of change and development in the region. By way of example only, the Arab Gulf States have taken a variety of measures toward developing and reforming political, social and economic life. The Kingdom of Bahrain and State of Qatar have begun a series of reforms to widen political participation, entrench freedom of expression and carry out constitutional reforms. Kuwait has held direct elections for the National Assembly with the participation of women for the first time. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has held municipal elections in a number of regions of the country and announced it will hold elections in the remaining regions subsequently. A number of Arab States, such as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen have announced a review and modernization of their electoral laws in line with the new trends. In Egypt, significant constitutional amendments have been announced, subject to debate and approval. A number of Arab States including, inter alia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Morocco, have made wide-ranging changes in areas of human rights and updated their legislation in line with these changes, particularly in respect of women's rights.

I participated in an important conference held in the Republic of Yemen under the title, "Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court". This conference issued the Sana'a Declaration, dealing with issues of democracy, human rights, the role of civil society and the rule of law in supporting and protecting these.

13. The League of Arab States participated in two significant events in the Republic of Tunisia and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. At their request, the Secretariat-General took part in observing and monitoring the presidential and parliamentary elections and prepared a report with its comments on

and assessment of these two important developments. This participation will provide an incentive to the League of Arab States to develop its internal institutional capacities to undertake regular election monitoring in and at the request of any Arab States. It shall also participate in monitoring elections to be held shortly in Djibouti and Ethiopia.

14. These government efforts were accompanied by the efforts of important Arab elements. Civil society and business organizations were invited to participate in these efforts to highlight the approaches and views of the citizen and the private sector. These organizations held numerous meetings in Alexandria, Beirut, Morocco and elsewhere in parallel with summit meetings and meetings of the Forum for the Future to support the governmental meetings with their ideas and forge a special partnership aimed at the development of Arab societies. An important statement was released by the conference organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in collaboration with a number of civil society organizations across the Arab world. This formulated an important vision of Arab political, social, economic and cultural reform issues and defined the mechanisms at the disposal of civil society organizations to support actively the reform efforts in the region. The Arab Reform Forum will organize the Second Arab Reform Conference entitled, "Successful Models", at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, shortly before this Summit.

15. These successes on the path to development and modernization in the Arab world, despite their significance, ought not to give us a feeling of contentment or lead to a state of lethargy on the part of the responsible bodies across the Arab world. The road is still long, the challenges numerous and the ambitions greater yet. The hopes of the Arab citizen for a promising future are attached to the continuity and speed of building upon what has already been achieved and in accelerating achievement in the coming years.

16. The Arab Summit in Tunis released its important statement on the Status of Development and Modernization in the Arab States that has become the primary authority for all who seek to address issues of reform either inside or outside the Arab nation. This document represents a general framework and the broad outlines clarifying the bases and principles on which reform is to be based and affirms the important position of this issue on the agenda of the Arab region's priorities. In the final analysis, it is an expression by the Arab leaders of collective and joint responsibility in meeting the concerns of the Arab masses and the challenges confronting human development in all senses. It remains for the executive, legislative and judicial bodies to translate the approaches and concepts into pan-Arab plans and programmes, detailed national programmes and mechanisms for follow-up and evaluation.

17. As we have mentioned, the Arab States have addressed the international calls and initiatives wisely and opened channels for dialogue that have borne fruit in forums, programmes and projects for development and modernization. However, beside the above, what we are today lacking are Arab mechanisms to deal with the issues of development and modernization addressed by the Summit, to deepen and consolidate the dialogue and exchange of experience among Arab States – not only the dialogue with international bodies – and through these pan-Arab platforms and mechanisms, to establish interim goals and executive programmes giving expression to this vision.

18. Accordingly, the League of Arab States shall be concerned with the monitoring of implementation and with the dialogue of Arab States with each other, civil society organizations and the private sector as a purely Arab dialogue that enables reform and development to emanate from a comprehensive Arab strategy.

II. Summary of achievements at national level

19. The documents supplied by a number of Arab States on their achievements are enclosed in a separate document. The most important points are summarized below.

The Republic of Tunisia

20. The report reviewed Tunisia's progress in reform and development in the areas of political democracy, economic development and social advancement.

21. In the area of democracy and guarantee of freedoms, the Constitution has been amended to allow multiple candidates for the Presidency of the Republic. The system of election by majority vote has been discarded in favour of a system of proportional representation and a new system of voting adopted, requiring the distribution of seats by electoral district and at national level, thus making it easier for opposition parties to obtain seats in the Chamber of Deputies and municipal councils. There are eight recognised political parties in Tunisia. A legislative review added a number of provisions, defining torture as a crime, abolishing hard labour and guaranteeing prisoners' rights. The supervision and administration of prisons has been transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. The State Security Court has been abolished. Tunisia today has 8,000 organizations, representing a fundamental pillar of civil society, and human rights units have been set up in a number of ministries. Laws have been promulgated that contain procedures for promoting the values of religious and ethnic tolerance and gender equality. Workers enjoy the right to form trades' unions, which may issue their own newspapers. The Press Code has been amended to increase public freedoms and a private radio station has been launched. In 2005, the first private television channel was established. A number of measures have been taken to ensure gender equality and women have a growing presence in all sectors. By 2004, women had a 22.75% representation in the Chamber of Deputies.

22. In terms of balanced development, Tunisia is striving to advance the social, economic and cultural rights of its citizens. Personal income has risen. The country enjoys an 18% rate of growth in foreign trade. Exports represent 42% of GDP. The rate of investment is 27%, of which the private sector's contribution is at least 60%. Endeavouring to develop its economy and make it more competitive, Tunisia has embarked upon a complete overhaul of its economic facilities which, in 2010, will face European competition within the framework of the free trade area between the European Union and Tunisia. More than 2,000 facilities have been established with foreign investment, helping to reduce unemployment to 13.9% in 2004.

23. In the area of social development, Tunisia has embarked upon the development of innovative mechanisms to promote national solidarity, resulting in an annual growth rate of 5% and reduction of poverty to a level of not more than 4% of the population. New programmes have been put in place to facilitate the creation of small enterprises. Additionally, there is State assistance for destitute families, school pupils, students, the needy, the elderly and handicapped, and free treatment in public hospitals. Tunisia is improving its educational system by building a knowledge

society, capacity-building and establishing the "family computer" programme. An estimated 6.5% of homes were equipped with a computer in 2004, with a likely 10% by 2006. All libraries, university institutions, research centres and schools are linked to the internet, and paperless government agencies and ministries are being developed, together with remote education.

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

24. The series of measures taken by Algeria attest to the significant strides it has made in establishing a free-market, democratic political system. It has followed the policy of Civil Harmony and dialogue as the principle tool to recover from its national crisis and focused on removing the effects and legacy of this crisis by promoting comprehensive national reconciliation within a framework including all political persuasions. It has also begun to address transparently the issue of "the missing".

25. Algeria reinforced its democratic and pluralist orientation by holding legislative and local elections in 2002 and presidential elections in 2004, in which the League of Arab States and other international bodies participated as observers. Algeria has bolstered human rights by the creation of a comprehensive system with parliamentary, judicial and regional mechanisms and has extended the freedom to establish private associations and civil society organizations.

26. To bolster the important role of the media in the service of transparency and neutrality in all areas of modernization, the Government is engaged in formulating legislation to facilitate satellite media in which it is adopting the standards applied in the Member States of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

27. On the economic front, the liberalization of the economy is now almost complete, following difficult but necessary measures and structural adjustments. The door has been opened to private investment and domestic and foreign partnership.

28. In the report, Algeria presented its vision for the next five years and defined six key goals it hopes to achieve within that time. These are:

- Reform of the justice system and consolidation of the rule of law, requiring that the independence of the judiciary be strengthened and that cases be settled and judgement executed promptly;
- Continuing reform of the State structure by providing the administration with the tools and means necessary to consolidate good governance, deepen decentralization and transform the citizen into a full partner;
- Developing the partnership between State, the private sector and civil society by extending participation and strengthening the dialogue between the active players in society to put together a social and economic contract cementing a genuine partnership between government, union movements and businessmen;
- Reform of the Family Code by achieving equality for women in respect of rights and duties; new provisions will be incorporated into the Family Code to guarantee balance between both spouses;

- Educational reform and development to achieve a qualitative transformation in the educational system and its openness to global knowledge and culture and foreign languages, while enhancing the basic elements of national identity;
- Deepening the economic and fiscal reforms through rigour, consistent with the process of privatization of public resources and their management, stimulating private enterprise, modernizing the financial and banking sector and diversifying the industrial, agricultural and services production bases.

The Republic of Djibouti

29. The report reviewed Djibouti's most significant achievements and reforms. In the political sphere, the Constitution permitted a plurality of parties and eight parties were founded, forming two coalitions to fight the elections.

30. Economic restructuring programmes were implemented, underpinned by support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Nevertheless, the Republic of Djibouti still faces problems of low productivity, inadequate infrastructure and a paucity of qualified human resources. The Government has created the outlines of an ambitious political and economic programme to 2015 and is currently working to create economic investment facilities and structures to give impetus to the national economy through such projects and encourage private investment in order to develop rapidly the service sector and achieve growth that will, in turn, create job opportunities, reduce poverty, strengthen institutional capacity, develop production centres and disseminate information. The Government has also begun a programme to privatize several government corporations and has established the National Privatization Committee within the Ministry of National Economy.

31. In terms of social issues, the report focused on woman's role in society. In order to provide women with proper protection and safeguard their rights, the Government has taken a number of measures to incorporate the Djiboutian woman into the process of sustainable development. These measures include the creation of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs that has participated in the drafting and application of Government policy for the advancement of women, the proposal of draft legislative provisions and laws relating to the rights of women and the family and the development of measures to ensure political and social equality. The Family Code has been ratified, limiting the man's authority and absolute control over the woman. Women have taken up positions in the executive, legislative and judicial authorities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

32. The Kingdom has seen significant strides in economic, social and political development since the Tunis Summit. These may be summarized as follows:

33. To consolidate the principle of dialogue, the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue was established; to date, the Centre has organized four meetings, the third of which was on women's issues and the fourth, on youth issues.

34. In March 2004, permission was granted to establish the National Human Rights Association.

35. The participation by nationals in domestic affairs was expanded by participation in the municipal council elections held in Riyadh province; elections will be held subsequently in the other provinces.

36. Two articles of the statutes of the Consultative Council were amended to strengthen its role and give it the right to propose and update draft statutes and amendments. A Minister of State for Consultative Council Affairs was appointed to achieve greater coordination between the Council of Ministers and Consultative Council.

37. Several government institutions were restructured to increase efficiency

38. The areas where women may work have been expanded and women's sections have been set up in government agencies that provide services related to women. It has been decided to create a permanent higher committee for women's affairs.

39. In the economy, the Kingdom is continuing to remove obstacles and encourage enterprise and foreign investment. A general strategy to develop national tourism has been approved, as has a strategy for gas employing a 75% national workforce. A list of utilities for privatization has been drawn up that will be put into effect gradually.

40. Income tax on foreign capital has been reduced from 45% to 20%. Tax on natural gas has been set at 30%.

41. In connection with the Kingdom's accession to the World Trade Organization, the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry has resolved to establish centres to provide technical and service support to businessmen.

42. The Eighth Five-year Development Plan has been promulgated, focusing on areas of technology and development projects, and the patents regulations have been issued.

43. Priority has been accorded to speeding up the delivery of services to nationals, promoting the course of development and reducing the national debt. Surpluses of SR 41 billion from the 2004 budget and SR 70 billion from the 2005 budget have been set aside for expenditure on the economic and social sectors specifically, public and higher education, health services, social development, water and sanitation.

The Republic of the Sudan

44. The Secretariat-General received a memorandum from the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of the Sudan containing a report from the Sudanese Women's General Union on development and modernization efforts, during 2004, on the political, social, economic, educational and health axes, as follows:

45. The political axis:

- The endeavour to preserve the gains achieved in women's rights and increase the representation of women in legislative and decision making positions;
- The formation of a permanent women's network for unity, reconstruction and peace (ANSAM) whose membership includes more than 80 organizations, associations and leagues working in the field of peace and development;

- The submission of a recommendation to the National Assembly (parliament) calling for a change in the current law to conform to the Constitution, giving the mother the right to confer nationality by blood, just as the man.

46. The social development axis:

- Quranic schools;
- The establishment of social development centres in the States of West Darfur, Khartoum South Kurdufan, White Nile, Blue Nile, North Kurdufan, West Kurdufan, River Nile, Northern, South Darfur, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gadarif, Jazirah, Sennar and South Darfur.

47. The economic development axis:

- The creation of centres for the manufacture of dairy produce in South Kurdufan;
- The creation of the revolving fund for the development of rural women;
- The implementation of the Settlement Project for the return home of refugees in South Kordofan and the States of Darfur and the South;
- Transfer of ownership of the means of production to the poorest elements in society and economic consciousness-raising through training;
- Establishment of the women's portfolio project (investment for productive families);
- Award of the fifth Rural Women's Prize.

48. The education axis:

- Establishment of the "Reading for all" project (creation of "Reading for all" centres, creation and upgrading of kindergartens) in the States of Atbara, Sennar, Darfur and Kurdufan;
- Organization and awarding of the Fatima Talib Prize for eradication of illiteracy.

49. The health axis:

- A programme in conjunction with the national programme to combat HIV/AIDS by raising awareness among women of the dangers of HIV/AIDS;
- Participation in vaccination campaigns for children in the States of Qadarif, White Nile, Khartoum, North Kurdufan and Red Sea;
- Drafting of a proposal for combating malaria for the United Nations Programme, plus continuing to distribute means of protection against malaria (mosquito nets).

The Republic of Iraq

50. The Secretariat-General received a memorandum from the Government of Iraq advising that, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances the country is experiencing and which represent a real impediment to development and modernization, Iraq has succeeded in achieving profound and far-reaching reforms, including:

51. The establishment, in 2003, of Iraq's first Ministry for Human Rights;

52. A plurality of political parties, most of which participated in the former Interim Governing Council, the new Government and the National Assembly;

53. The establishment of a large number of civil society organizations working in the area of human rights including, inter alia, the Organization of Human Rights in Iraq, the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Iraq and the Iraqi Association of Victims of Terrorism; these have been granted a substantial degree of freedom of movement and independence and participate alongside the Government in international gatherings;

54. Freedom of the press and the development of training methods and programmes to raise media capabilities and awareness of the democratic process and human rights;

55. The participation of women in the former Interim Governing Council, the new Cabinet, the National Assembly, the Constitution Drafting Committee, diplomatic missions, political parties, trades unions and popular organizations, such that women have become an effective part of the process of modernization and development of political, economic, social and cultural life;

56. The commitment to international conventions on human rights to which Iraq is a signatory and the endeavour to accede to those to which it is not.

The Lebanese Republic

57. In the reports submitted to the League of Arab States (the National Report of the National Permanent Population Committee and the report of the Ministry of Health), the Lebanese Republic focused on development and modernization in the areas of social and economic development, health, education, women and human rights, advising that Lebanon has made great strides in demographic transition, epidemiological transition and human development. Appropriate mechanisms to address population issues have been created, such as the National Permanent Population Committee, projects and studies to improve the living conditions of the poor, regional development, health sector reform and a programme to combat HIV/AIDS, as well as the endeavour to upgrade the education system through the Plan for Educational Enhancement in Lebanon.

58. In the area of the rights of women and children, a number of conventions have been ratified that relate to the rights of the child; the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs and, subsequently, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, were established. A number of civil society organizations and women's associations have been brought together and their efforts coordinated within the framework of the National Commission of Women's Affairs. Lebanon has ratified a number of the conventions of the United Nations and International Labour Organization on wage equality and non-discrimination in education. Lebanon has also ratified the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women (with reservations in respect of several clauses).

59. The report speaks frankly about a number of challenges, the most important of which are the achievement of high and sustained levels of economic growth, the expansion of opportunities, the national commitment to youth issues and reinforcing gender empowerment and equality. The State administration and system of

governance are constantly striving for political stability. There are culture and equality deficits and an absence of gender equality in the decision making process. The report refers to the challenge civil society faces working as a pressure group for effective participation in decision making.

The Arab Republic of Egypt

60. Egypt has adopted a comprehensive program of political reform. On 26 February, 2005, President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak requested the People's Assembly and Consultative Assembly to make amendments to the Constitution, add new articles and put these to a general referendum before the next presidential elections. The amendments are designed to enable the election of the President of the Republic by direct, secret ballot, to provide guarantees for the nomination of more than one candidate for the presidential elections and to give the opportunity to Egyptian political parties of different colours to nominate one of their leaders.

61. To ensure impartiality and transparency, the amendment shall provide for the creation of a higher committee to supervise the elections, with full judicial oversight of the process.

62. The President of the Republic also announced a vision for the future course of national action and the strengthening and continuation of political reform on the following bases:

- Commitment to citizenship as a basis for full equality in respect of rights and duties, regardless of ideology, gender, belief or religion;
- Consolidation of the principles of the rule of law;
- Respect for the citizen's basic rights;
- Promotion of the role of political parties and civil society organizations in political and civil life;
- Raising the efficiency and modernizing the structure of the government bureaucracy and achieving greater investment in manpower;
- The achievement of economic growth without upsetting the social balance;
- Encouragement of the spirit of enterprise and enhancement of the scientific and creative capacity of individuals and institutions in society;
- Raising productivity and quality standards to enhance economic capacity and competitiveness;
- Continued engagement with the world, integration with the international community and interaction with change.

63. The report from the Egyptian Arab Republic reviewed the activities of the National Council for Human Rights; this has a membership of 27 prominent personalities and seven permanent committees (Committee on Civil and Political Rights, Committee on Economic Rights, Committee on Social Rights, Committee on Cultural Rights, Committee on International Relations, Committee on Legislative Affairs and Complaints Committee). The Council has a mandate to establish a national action plan to strengthen and develop human rights in Egypt and propose means of putting this plan into effect, as well as holding conferences, forums and discussion groups and cooperating with international and local organizations and

bodies concerned with human rights. The Council has issued invitations to six international conferences on the subjects of education, human rights, combating discrimination against Islam, issues relating to emigration, issues of corruption and terrorism, economic and cultural rights within countries and different models for national institutions. It also held a forum on addressing hostility to Islam and the assessment of tolerance and understanding.

64. The Council drafted a memorandum demanding an end to the state of emergency, submitted to the President of the Republic. It also requested the amendment of several articles in the Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure and submitted recommendations on intellectual and artistic freedom of thought and expression.

65. From 6 to 8 March 2005, the Council, in collaboration with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the League of Arab States, organized a conference on "National Human Rights Organizations in the Arab World" designed to reinforce the role of national organizations currently in being in the Arab region, as well as exchange experience with similar organizations in other parts of the world.

The Kingdom of Morocco

66. The Kingdom of Morocco submitted three reports on its efforts in support of development and modernization. In the Throne Day speech on 30 July 2004, His Majesty King Mohammed VI launched the project for community democracy, modernity and solidarity which adopts an integrated approach to modernization and development. The project includes the following elements:

- The building of a State of law, institutions and justice by the definition of a new and integrated concept of governance based on the deepening of democracy and plurality and modernization of the judicial system;
- The promotion and protection of human rights and public freedoms;
- The adherence to identity while embracing modernity; the establishment of a new social contract;
- Economic development and social cohesion;
- The development of Morocco's relations with its regional and international environment.

67. This axis aims at a restructuring of Moroccan society by consolidating a culture of human rights, the politics of participation, modernization of the administration, justice and social solidarity. The application of these concepts has required the revision of a number of laws and regulations to enable individual and collective freedoms to be guaranteed and protected and the State of law, democracy and plurality to be consolidated. It has also required the introduction of reforms in the electoral laws to ensure transparency, impartiality, neutrality and independence from the administration. Much attention has been given to modernizing the judicial system to strengthen its authority and independence vis-à-vis the administration and litigants, speed up the implementation of rulings and achieve equality for all before the law.

68. The Moroccan revival project has been concerned with the position of women and to place them systematically in senior public administrative posts. The code regulating election to the House of Representatives was amended to provide for a national list of 30 ladies from each party, guaranteeing a significant proportion of women in the current House of Representatives. Attention has also been given to strengthening protection for the rights of women and children by bringing national legislation into line with the international conventions Morocco has ratified. Parliament unanimously approved the Family Status Code, which has introduced "family jurisdiction" sections in Moroccan courts and led to the adoption of a modern framework that raises woman to the status of full partner of the man. Women's rights have been amended in respect of responsibility for and custody of children and equality in respect of rights, duties, responsibilities and authority within marriage, divorce has been reformed and restrictions placed on polygamy, outlawing it save in exceptional circumstances.

69. In another dimension of human rights, Morocco has made significant progress by establishing the Justice and Reconciliation Commission, charged with studying and resolving cases of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention in the country since independence in 1956 until 1999. In establishing this Commission, the aim was to consolidate gains and resolve in a just manner all non-judicial cases of gross violations of human rights in the past. This will be done by conducting investigations, receiving testimony, determining the type and scale of past violations, continuing to investigate cases of forced disappearance where the fate of the victim remains unknown and determine the responsibility of agencies of State. The Commission will also determine material and moral compensation and strive to develop and enrich a culture and conduct of dialogue to secure the foundations of reconciliation and bolster the democratic transformation.

70. A law pertaining to the Commission was promulgated, requiring all State authorities and agencies to cooperate with the Commission and provide it with full information. It provides for the financial and administrative independence of the Commission. To ensure the participation of all sectors of society, the Commission has put in place a plan for contacting victims, their relatives, the media and civil society.

71. Several dimensions of human rights and public freedoms have been incorporated in various laws, including the Code of Public Freedoms, the Labour Code, the Penal Code and Prison Code, which have been modernized and reformed by inclusion of a number of amendments.

72. Perhaps the most significant point in the Moroccan report is an achievement that affects all sectors namely, the development and modernization of the audio-visual sector by the creation of a Supreme Broadcasting Authority to end the State monopoly of radio and television.

The Republic of Yemen

73. In the area of political development, the report advised that, in accordance with recent constitutional amendments, the President of the Republic shall be chosen by direct election for not more than two seven-year terms. A Consultative Council was established in 2001, alongside the Council of Deputies, which represents the legislative authority. Political plurality has become a cornerstone of the system.

74. A number of practical measures have been taken to ensure broad participation in civil, political and social life, including a thorough revision of the relevant parts of the legal system. There are currently 3,191 associations, organizations and unions.

75. Regarding the participation of women in political life, all laws stipulate that no action or measure may be taken on the basis of gender discrimination. The number of women registered to vote in the 2003 elections was one million. A Ministry of Human Rights has been established, with a woman in charge of the portfolio and there are a substantial number of women in the judiciary, executive agencies and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

76. In 2004, Yemen hosted a conference on "Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court".

77. Within the framework of the programmes and initiatives arising from the Broader Middle East initiative launched at the G8 Summit, Yemen is adopting the "Democracy Assistance" axis, in cooperation with Italy and Turkey.

78. Yemen has launched a number of economic and fiscal reform measures to liberalize sectors of its economy and enhance international competitiveness.

Annex V to the letter dated 27 April 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Situation in Iraq

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The Situation in Iraq

I. Introduction

For many years, the situation in Iraq represented a grave challenge to the foundations of Joint Arab Action as the League of Arab States reeled from the shock to one of its mainstays and the limitation of its ability to act to effect. It is no surprise that we doubted the ability of the League to overcome this crisis and maintain its existence in the light of the structural fragility that was exposed and the critical state which Arab-Arab relations reached.

After the occupation of Iraq and fall of the regime, the League opened its doors to Iraqis of different persuasions of whom it knew little, met with Iraqi political, religious and tribal forces and received political parties and popular groups of all ethnic and sectarian hues. It learned from them directly of events in Iraq and of the intrigues some malicious elements were devising in a land where the State had been convulsed and security had vanished. The League came to understand the extent of the gravity of the situation and to comprehend the designs to isolate Iraq from its environment and strike at its very affiliation.

It was essential to recover equilibrium and do what could be done. The League took the courageous decision, which it believed at the time to be correct and which the passage of time has confirmed, of approving the assumption of Iraq's seat by the Interim Governing Council (IGC). At the time, this was a difficult but necessary choice.

The formation of the IGC, composed of 25 members from different elements of the Iraqi population, was announced on 13 July 2003. Through the IGC, Iraq addressed the issue of acquiring international legitimacy by establishing contact with regional and international organization, chief among them the United Nations. However, when the United Nations received an IGC delegation on 22 July 2003, it resolved to do so in their capacity as individuals, under article 39 of the Rules of Procedure of the Security Council which allows it to hear persons in an individual capacity. It is no secret that the IGC got its start toward international legitimacy on the back of Arab legitimacy with the resolution to approve its assumption of Iraq's seat at the League of Arab States. This opened several doors which had, until then, been closed.

On 24 August 2003, I received at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General a large delegation from the IGC, led by Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari. After listening to their submissions and views and their request to fill Iraq's seat at the League, I affirmed the current stance of the League of Arab States that the IGC was one of a number of measures required for the formation of a national government representing all sections of the Iraqi people and capable of realizing their aspirations for a new Iraq, chief among them an end to occupation. I informed the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the substance of the meeting and, at the 120th ordinary session of the Council of the League in September 2003, called for consideration of the special request to fill Iraq's seat at the League. Following study and thorough debate, it was resolved to approve this request, as I mentioned. This resolution was taken on the basis of the desire to maintain Iraq within the Arab environment and help it to emerge from the devastating crisis it faces. At the same time, by consensus of Member States, the League opened its doors to various Iraqi forces in order to strengthen contact with those elements which will have a decisive say in mapping out the future of the country.

II. Major achievements of the League of Arab States in support of Iraq since March 2003

The League acted to assist the Iraqi people from the time that foreign forces entered the country in March 2003, calling upon the Arab bloc in the United Nations to convene an emergency session of the Security Council to adopt a resolution for an end to the aggression and withdrawal of foreign troops, in implementation of resolution 6266 (24 March 2003) of the Council of the League at ministerial level. The Security Council went into session on 26 March 2003 but failed to adopt a resolution.

On 20 April 2004, I called for an extraordinary meeting of specialized Arab organizations to aid the Iraqi people and a report was drafted on the possibilities of assistance for Iraq from the institutions of Joint Arab Action. This report was sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, President of the Security Council and President of the General Assembly and adopted as an official United Nations document.

I continued liaison with all the international, regional and Arab parties concerned with the situation in Iraq, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his special representative in Iraq, the late Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, his then special advisor, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi and his subsequent special representative in Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Qazi.

The visit of the Arab League delegation to Iraq

To reinforce the role of the League of Arab States in Iraq and strengthen contact with the Iraq people, I sent a high-level delegation from the Secretariat-General, led by Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to Iraq from 19 to 30 December 2003. The delegation visited various provinces in the north, centre and south of Iraq, met Iraqi Government officials and more than 600 representatives of political parties and tribes, religious authorities, intellectuals, university lecturers and representatives of civil society and heard different views on the way to deal with the current grave situation. The delegation arrived at a number of conclusions and made interesting proposals. Within the framework of the continuing consultations between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, I sent a letter on 19 January 2004 to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, informing him of the most significant points and observations contained in the report of the Arab League delegation to Iraq.

The meetings of the Troika Committee on Iraq

In implementation of resolution 264 (23 May 2004) of the Council of the League at ministerial level, requiring the formation of an Arab Troika consisting of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Tunisia and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, as well as the Secretary-General, to liaise as necessary to implement the substance of the aforementioned resolution and developments relating thereto, a meeting of the Troika at delegate level was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 6 June 2004 to debate the draft United

States-United Kingdom resolution put before the Security Council. The Committee affirmed the importance of Iraqi participation in further meetings of the Troika. The Committee held its second meeting, at ministerial level, in Tunis on 28 and 29 July 2004, studying developments of the situation in Iraq and examining the report of the Secretary-General on the steps taken to implement the Summit resolution. The Committee took note of the position of the Government of Iraq on the issue of the dispatch of an Arab and Islamic force to Iraq and studied ways of assisting and supporting Iraq in various areas. The Committee submitted a number of proposals to the 122nd session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (14 September 2004).

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Troika, the Secretary-General and the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs held a second meeting at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General on 14 September 2004. The Committee met with the President of the Security Council on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 20 September 2004. It also met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

A number of communications and meetings were conducted with international parties concerned with the situation in Iraq to consult on the latest developments on the Iraqi scene. I sent letters on the substance of the Arab stance as contained in the resolution of the Arab Summit (Tunis) to secretaries-general and heads of international organizations. I did likewise with regard to the resolution of the Arab Summit (Algiers) on the developments in the situation in Iraq.

Follow-up and bolstering of the political process

Security Council resolution 1546 (8 June 2004), declaring an end to the occupied status of Iraq and defining the mandate and tasks of the multinational force, represented a new phase in the process of political transition in Iraq. It authorized a political process in accordance with a specific timetable, requiring the formation of a sovereign, interim Iraqi government to assume authority with effect from 30 June 2004, the convening of a national conference reflecting the diversity of Iraqi society and the holding of democratic elections on 31 December 2004 or, at the latest, 31 January 2005 in order to form a Transitional National Assembly to assume responsibility for the formation of an interim government and the drafting of a permanent constitution as a prelude to the establishment of a constitutionally elected government on 31 December 2005.

I followed closely all stages of the political process and welcomed the formation of the interim Iraqi government, working to strengthen consultation and contact with it. I also welcomed the holding of Iraqi elections on 30 January 2005 and formation of the interim Iraqi government as a significant step toward launching an effective political process in which all elements of the Iraqi people will participate and which will initiate a wide-ranging process of reconstruction and development and prepare the way for the departure of foreign forces. I called upon all elements of the Iraq people to take part in the referendum on the constitution and called for a complete halt to military operations and acts of violence to facilitate the holding of the elections on 15 December 2005 in a climate conducive to their success and to affirm their credibility.

Participation in international and regional conferences and meetings in support of Iraq

The Sharm El-Sheikh Conference (23 November 2004)

I took part in the international ministerial meeting of States neighbouring Iraq, the G8 and China held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 23 November 2004, in which the States of the Arab Troika also participated. In the course of the meeting, I put forward an idea for addressing the situation in Iraq, based upon a number of elements, the most important of which were national accord and the call for an inclusive Conference on Iraqi National Accord, dealing with the foreign military presence and agreement upon a timetable for the withdrawal of military forces on the basis of Security Council resolution 1546, a key role for the United Nations and a speeding up of the process of reconstruction, as well as resistance to any slide into sectarian strife or civil war. I affirmed that the League of Arab States and the general Arab framework it represents will continue to be a genuine safety net for the new Iraq as it develops.

Meetings of States neighbouring Iraq (Turkey, 30 April 2005)

The League of Arab States monitored the meetings of the States neighbouring Iraq, as well as the meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of these States. I took part in the eighth meeting of the States neighbouring Iraq held in Istanbul on 30 April 2005, where I affirmed the League's support for all stages of the political process in Iraq and its readiness to participate in this process on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Arab Summit and Ministerial Council.

Iraq International Conference (Brussels, 22 June 2005)

At the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg and the United States Secretary of State, I participated in the Iraq International Conference in Brussels on 22 June 2005. I affirmed the importance of standing beside the Iraqi people and supporting their political progress, the rebuilding of their State and institutions and recovery of their sovereignty. I affirmed the importance of the participation of the League of Arab States, as the regional political organization to which Iraq belongs, in the current political process and that such participation would introduce an element of balance and reassurance to Iraqi public opinion, representing a safety net for any political process that hoped to achieve effect inside and outside Iraq. I held important meetings on the sidelines of the conference with a number of Iraqi political figures, where the latest developments on the drafting of the constitution were considered, together with ways of providing support and assistance for this process.

The Ministerial Committee on Iraq

The 124th ordinary session of the Council of the League adopted resolution 6553 (8 September 2005) on the formation of the Ministerial Committee on Iraq, consisting of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Secretary-General, to draft a strategic concept for assisting Iraq.

The Committee met at delegate level at the headquarters of the League of Arab States on 28 September 2005, where the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia called for the ministerial meeting to be held in Jeddah. The Ministerial Committee held its first meeting in Jeddah on 2 October 2005, where it was agreed to hold a Conference on Iraqi National Accord, with the agreement of the Government and political leaders, at the headquarters of the Arab League and requested the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to visit Iraq as soon as possible in pursuit of the achievement of Iraqi national accord.

In implementation of the resolution of the Jeddah meeting, I dispatched a delegation from the Secretariat-General, headed by Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli, Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Council Affairs to Baghdad in October 2005 to prepare for my visit.

The visit of the Secretary-General to Iraq

At the head of a delegation of officials from the League of Arab States, I visited Iraq from 20 to 24 October 2005. The visit included Baghdad and Najaf, as well as Irbil and Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdish region of Iraq, in the course of which I met His Excellency President Jalal Talabani and Deputy Presidents, His Excellency Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Prime Minister, a number of ministers and officials, leaders and heads of political parties, political groups and religious authorities. In Najaf, I met with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sistani and received tribal and religious delegations, representatives of civil society and a number of former Iraqi army officers, religious figures and others from various elements of Iraqi society. I visited the headquarters of the transitional National Assembly and the Kurdish parliament.

During this mission, I announced an initiative in support of Iraqi national dialogue and accord, in the name of all Arab States and under the auspices of the League of Arab States. I affirmed that the League and Member States stood as one with all the Iraqi people in its varied religious and ethnic composition.

The visit resulted in the agreement of all political and religious forces to convene a Conference on Iraqi National Accord and to hold the preparatory meeting for this conference at the headquarters of the League of Arab States.

Within the context of the preparations for the meeting, I dispatched a delegation from the Secretariat-General, headed by Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli, to Baghdad from 5 to 9 November 2005 to fix the timing of the meeting and make preparations.

The preparatory meeting for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord

I called for the convening of the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord from 19 to 21 November 2005, at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States and invited the Iraqi President, Prime Minister, all official political figures and leaders of the various political, religious and popular forces.

The proceedings were inaugurated by His Excellency Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Minister of State and personal representative of His

Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and President of the Arab Summit and Mr. Ashraf Qazi, Special Representative for Iraq of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The opening session was attended by Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs sitting on the Ministerial Committee on Iraq and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lebanese Republic, with Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, Advisor to the President of the Republic of the Sudan, the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, the representative of the Arab Maghreb Union, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassadors of the Permanent Member States of the Security Council, the Permanent Delegates to the League of Arab States, a number of ambassadors of foreign states linked by memoranda of understanding to the League of Arab States, the representative of the European Union and representatives from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Islamic Development Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Participants studied the preparations for the conference and its working mechanisms. Two working groups were formed, the first chaired by Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem and responsible for preparations for the conference, the second chaired by Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail to study confidence building measures; a drafting committee was chaired by myself. Agreement was reached on the following:

- To hold the Conference on Iraqi National Accord during the last week of February or first week of March 2006, in Baghdad;
- The conference agenda should include the following axes: the expansion of the political process to include all forces on the basis of embrace of the democratic approach; the unity, independence and sovereignty of Iraq; the drawing up of plans to conclude the mission of the multinational force; the security situation; and equality of citizenship (rights and duties);
- Determine of the criteria for participation in the conference;
- To form a reduced committee, the Preparation and Follow-up Committee, to prepare for the conference;
- To adopt a number of confidence-building measures during the forthcoming phase.

The final communiqué issued by the meeting reflected consensus on a number of key principles, represented by commitment to the unity, sovereignty, freedom and independence of Iraq; non-intervention in its internal affairs; respect for the will of the Iraqi people and their democratic choices within a pluralist and federal framework and their right to determine their future by themselves; affirmation of the desire to make available the best conditions for holding the Conference on Iraqi National Accord ; that the Iraqi people are looking forward to the day when foreign troops leave Iraq and to building their own army and security forces; that resistance is a legitimate right of all peoples while terrorism does not represent legitimate resistance; condemnation of terrorism, acts of violence and kidnapping targeting Iraqis and the demand that it be opposed immediately; condemnation of the charge of unbelief against the Iraqi people; the call for the release of innocent detainees who have not been convicted in a court of law; the demand for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops by putting in place an immediate national programme for rebuilding the armed forces; respect for all sections of the Iraqi people; and non-obstruction of the peace process. The participants likewise called upon the Arab States to support Iraq in various fields, principally debt cancellation, contributing to the training and upgrading of Iraqi administrative personnel, reinforcing the Arab diplomatic presence in Iraq, playing an effective role in the reconstruction of Iraq and helping to control the borders.

International reaction welcomed the convening of the preparatory meeting for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord and its outcome. On a number of occasions, the Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed his welcome and backing for the initiative of the League of Arab States to hold the conference and, in statements issued on 16 December 2005 and 27 February 2006, the European Union welcomed this step.

The visit of Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, Arab League envoy and representative of the Secretary-General, to Iraq

The conditions in which the last elections in Iraq were held, on 15 December 2005, the resulting delay in declaring the results and consequent temporary shelving of the entire political process, led to a reconsideration of convening the conference as agreed at the end of February or beginning of March 2006, particularly in view of the worsening security situation and consequent disruption. In the light of communication with Iraqi officials and leaders of political parties, I believed it was necessary to act in the field to maintain the momentum of success achieved at the preparatory meeting in Cairo.

On 2 February 2006, I wrote to His Excellency Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, for his view of the Arab League employing the experience of Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, Special Advisor to the President, as Arab League envoy to Iraq and representative of the Secretary-General in the efforts to achieve Iraqi national accord.

In this capacity, Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail visited Iraq with the aim of liaising and discovering the expectations of Iraqis with regard to the convening of the conference. To this end, Dr. Ismail held a series of meetings with a number of Iraqi officials, chief among them His Excellency the President of the Republic and His Excellency the Prime Minister, as well as a number of officials, ministers and leaders of the coalitions and blocs which won the largest number of seats in the recent elections. These latter were: the United Iraqi Alliance, the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, the Iraqi Accord Front, the Iraqi National List and the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, which together hold 261 out of 275 seats in the National Assembly. Dr. Ismail also met with a number of other political forces and minorities, the Ambassadors of the United States and United Kingdom and the personal representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, Ambassador Ashraf Qazi. In view of the delay in declaring the election results, the preoccupation of all the political parties, blocs and leaders with the negotiations on the formation of the new government and the preference of a majority of them for postponing the Conference on Iraqi National Accord until after the formation of the government, agreement was reached on the following:

- To schedule the Conference on Iraqi National Accord with certainty in the first week of June, regardless of circumstances; the Preparation and Follow-up Committee was charged with determining the days on which the conference would be held during the said week;

- To affirm the symbolic significance of convening the conference in Baghdad;
- To form a special conference preparation and follow-up committee from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the League of Arab States.

Opening of the Arab League mission in Iraq

In the light of the resolutions of the Summit and Council of the League and the final communiqué of the preparatory meeting for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord affirming the need to reinforce the Arab presence in Iraq and, likewise, the role and presence of the Arab League, and in the light of the ongoing preparations for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, the 125th session of the Council of the League at ministerial level adopted resolution 6437 (4 March 2006) on the opening of an Arab League mission in Iraq and appointing Ambassador Mukhtar Lamani as its head, on the basis of my proposal.

The reconstruction of Iraq

Following up efforts in support of the Iraqi people to rebuild their country, I called for the convening of the second meeting of the institutions of Joint Arab Action in Amman, Jordan, on 6 January 2004, to activate the role of the League of Arab States in the rebuilding of Iraq. Arab organizations and institutions conveyed their views and possible contributions to this political process, in implementation of the resolutions of the Arab Summit and Ministerial Council. The Secretariat-General prepared a report on this meeting, a copy of which was sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and adopted as an official United Nations document. The Secretariat-General participated in international conference and meetings on the reconstruction of Iraq, beginning with the Madrid Donors' Conference (October 2003). It also participated in the meetings of the International Reconstruction Trust Fund Facility for Iraq and of the Donors' Committee held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, in February 2004, and in Doha, the State of Qatar, in May 2004. Together with a number of Arab organizations, the Secretariat-General took part in the fourth meeting of the Fund, held in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in July 2005. The Secretariat-General drafted reports on the results of these meetings, the extent of progress on reconstruction and the requirements of ministries and key sectors in Iraq. These reports were distributed to the institutions of Joint Arab Action in order to study means of providing assistance and contributing to these international efforts, in the light of requirements submitted by the Government of Iraq.

The meetings of the Higher Coordinating Committee for Joint Arab Action affirmed the importance of the institutions of Joint Arab Action playing an active part in the reconstruction process and activating Arab participation in the international meetings convened for this purpose. The Secretariat-General received reports from a number of pan-Arab organizations on the efforts, projects and training courses currently being implemented in Iraq. These organizations included the Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ALECSO), the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Services, the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, the Arab

Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA), the Council for Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). While several organizations presented proposals to support a number of Iraqi sectors, the security situation remains the principal obstacle to activation of the role of Arab organizations and institutions in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Iraqi debt

In implementation of the resolutions of the Council of the League at summit and ministerial levels calling on Arab States to expedite the cancellation or tangible reduction of Iraqi debt, in line with the resolution of the Paris Club, I sent letters to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Iraq's creditors States on 30 June 2005 on this subject. The final communiqué of the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord called upon Iraq's creditor states to cancel Iraqi debt.

Terrorism and acts of violence

The Council of the League of Arab States at summit and ministerial levels has condemned acts of violence and terrorism targeting civilians, the security forces, police and armed forces, and the kidnapping of persons working for international and humanitarian companies and organizations. The Council likewise condemned all terrorist acts targeting diplomats and journalists. I have been anxious to explain the League's position vis-à-vis acts of terrorism or violence, particularly sectarian violence, which I condemned at the time in the name of the League of Arab States. I have called upon all shades of the Iraqi people, their political leaders and religious authorities to oppose these acts, exercise self-control and not allow such acts to undermine Iraq's unity, security and stability.

Humanitarian assistance and the rebuilding of mosques

As regards humanitarian assistance, the Secretariat-General called, on 16 February 2006, for Member States to supply urgent aid to those who suffered losses from the floods that affected several towns in the north of Iraq, within the framework of the relief campaign organized by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In view of the grievous damage caused by the malicious terrorist explosion at the shrines of the martyred Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hasan al-Askari in Samarra and subsequent reprehensible attacks against mosques and places of worship in several Iraqi cities, resolution 6614 (4 March 2006) of the Council of the League at ministerial level called upon Arab States to contribute to the rebuilding of mosques and places of worship in Iraq. The Council expressed its gratitude to the State of Kuwait for the sum of US$ 10,000,000 provided for this purpose.

Cooperation with the United Nations

In relation to cooperation with the United Nations in support of Iraq, I continued my consultations with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, being anxious to exchange views with him on developments in the situation in Iraq. Likewise, during my visit to Iraq in October 2005, I met with the Secretary-General's special representative in Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Qazi and discussed ways of strengthening collaboration to facilitate the preparatory meeting of the

Conference on Iraqi National Accord. The support given by the United Nations and its mission in Iraq contributed to the success of this meeting.

During his visit to Baghdad in February 2006, Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail, special envoy of the Arab League to Iraq and personal representative of the Secretary-General, met with Mr. Ashraf Qazi and discussed developments in the Iraqi situation and cooperation in relation to preparations for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord.

The issue of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons

The League of Arab States continues to monitor closely this issue and the associated matters of the return of Kuwaiti property and archives, in accordance with the resolutions of the Council of the League. The number of Kuwaiti dead whose remains have been discovered has, to date, reached 227.

Human rights

The League of Arab States has followed closely the subject of human rights in Iraq. At its 18th session from 16 to 18 February 2004, the Permanent Arab Commission on Human Rights debated human rights violations by the previous Government of Iraqi, particularly the gross violations that occurred during the occupation of the State of Kuwait. Likewise, resolution 6437 (14 September 2004) of the Council of Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs condemned the inhuman crimes and practices committed by a number of soldiers from the coalition forces against individual Iraqis, which represent a flagrant breach of human rights and all international charters and treaties, and demanded the perpetrators of such crimes and those in charge of for them, be brought to justice.

The League has followed with great anxiety the painful developments in Iraq and increasing killings, raids and non-judicial detentions, in addition to the reports issued by human rights organizations on violations of human rights.

I have received a number of letters and appeals from various Iraqi bodies and sent letters to His Excellency President Jalal Talabani, the Prime Minister, Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hoshyar Zebari and the special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ambassador Ashraf Qazi, in which I expressed great concern at the dangerous escalation in the situation and called upon all concerned Iraq parties to adhere to the agreement reached at the preparatory meeting of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord on applying several confidence building measures. I received oral and written replies to these and communication is continuing.

The kidnapping of hostages

I have followed with great concern the issue of the kidnapping of Arab and foreign hostages in Iraq and the negative repercussions of this on stability in the country and on the possibilities for strengthening cooperation and the Arab and foreign presence in the country. I have made a number of contacts and efforts and issued several appeals and statements calling for an end to this phenomenon and seeking the release of hostages.

III. Recent developments in Iraq

Over the last year, Iraq has been able to achieve significant political progress. Three important elections were held in 2005: those in 30 January 2005 to elect the transitional National Assembly with responsibility for drafting the permanent Constitution and forming an interim government, the referendum on the Constitution in October 2005 and the last parliamentary elections on 15 December 2005 to elect the National Assembly for a period of four years, with responsibility for forming the new government. These events highlight a significant increase in the level of participation from around 59 percent in January 2005 and 64 percent in the referendum on the Constitution to approximately 75 percent in December 2005. Taking into account the security challenges, the parliamentary elections saw a high level of participation, were more inclusive of the various elements of the Iraqi people than previous elections and were held under relatively better security conditions.

The Constitution

The draft Constitution was approved in the referendum on 15 October 2005 with 79 percent of the votes. It was agreed that the National Assembly elected in December 2005 would form a committee of members of parliament representing all elements of the Iraqi people to conduct a comprehensive review of the new Constitution and present its recommendations and remarks on articles it believed should be amended to parliament for a vote within four months, in preparation for putting them to a popular referendum within two months from the date of their approval by the National Assembly.

The elections of December 2005

On 20 December 2005, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq declared the partial results of the elections held on 15 December, accepted under protest by several coalitions, parties and entities and demonstrations broke out in several cities. A national front, *Maram*, was formed, consisting of 24 coalitions and more than 40 parties that took part in the elections, chief among them the Iraqi Accord Front, the Iraqi National List and the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, that refused to accept the results. This front announced its complete rejection of the partial results and demanded an investigation of the complaints and challenges filed with the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. These numbered some 1985, of which 58 were classified "red" and to have affected the outcome of the election.

In response to a request from the Government of Iraq, the main political blocs, parties and the United Nations, two high-level officials from the Secretariat-General were dispatched to participate as part of an international team formed by the International Mission for Iraqi Elections to assess the election process and review the complaints and challenges. Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the election process, this review resulted in the cancellation of results from 227 ballot boxes out of a total of 30,000. The international team acknowledged the occurrence of several violations and made recommendations for the improvement of the conduct of elections in the future.

On 10 February 2006, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq announced the final results of the parliamentary elections. The United Iraqi Alliance won 128 seats, the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan 53 seats, the Iraqi Accord Front 44 seats, the Iraqi National List 25 seats, the Iraqi National Dialogue Front 11 seats, the Kurdistan Islamic Union 5 seats, the Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc 3 seats and the Message Party 2 seats; the Turkmen Front, Rafidain List, Mithal al-Alusi Iraqi Nation List and the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress each obtained one seat. There was general acceptance of these results, despite the reservations indicated.

Formation of the Government

The formation of a government of national unity embracing all elements of the Iraqi people is one of the greatest challenges Iraq currently faces. The Iraqi people and the international community look forward to this step contributing to the consolidation of security and stability, preserving the unity of the people and land of Iraq, leading to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraqi soil and enabling development and reconstruction.

The United Iraqi Alliance, the largest parliamentary bloc, elected Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari as its candidate for Prime Minister on 12 February 2006.

The new Iraqi parliament held its first session on 16 March 2006, with Dr. Adnan Pachachi, its eldest member, as Speaker.

The security situation and repercussions of the events in Samarra

Progress in the political process has not been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in security and living standards. Indeed, the security situation has worsened and the malicious terrorist explosion at the shrines of the Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hasan al-Askari in Samarra on 22 February 2006 and subsequent reprehensible attacks against mosques and places of worship has led to a deterioration of the situation and increasing regional and international fears that sectarian war will break out in Iraq. In spite of the judicious handling of this crisis by the political leadership and religious authorities and the efforts at pacification, the security situation remains alarming and reports continue to point to an increase in acts of violence and killing.

The initiative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

On 7 March 2006, following a meeting with Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein announced the readiness of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host, in coordination with the Arab League, a conference for Iraqi religious leaders in Amman to reach agreement on the best means of ensuring the unity and stability of Iraq. Consultations are continuing between the Government of Jordan, the Iraqi side and the Arab League to prepare for this conference.

IV. Remarks and Conclusions

After Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail had concluded his mission in Baghdad, a grave development occurred namely, the explosion at the shrines of the Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hasan al-Askari in Samarra. This terrible crime resulted in a release of passions, explosion of tension and the deterioration of the security situation to an unprecedented level which, had it not been for the judiciousness of righteous Iraqis, political leaders and religious authorities, would have led to a new tragedy in Iraq with unforeseeable consequences.

Postponement of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, scheduled for the beginning of June, as stated above, would require us not to remain idle. Member States and the Arab League must take an active part in assisting Iraq to emerge from its crisis and mitigate the sufferings of the fraternal Iraqi people.

Political signs, indicators and analyses reveal that agreement on the formation of a government of national unity remains difficult and that, the longer the political impasse lasts, the more complex the situation will become.

The period between the conclusion of this summit and the date set for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord will be a decisive time for Iraq. I am certain that the Arab role during this phase will be critical and believe that it may consist in the following proposals:

- The steps necessary for the League's mission in Iraq to commence activity should be taken upon conclusion of this Summit. In this regard, I hope that Arab leaders will make voluntary donations to enable the League to open its mission with the means necessary to carry out its task.
- The League should be a hive of activity during the next two months, receiving Iraqi political figures and officials with the goal of maintaining contact, coordination and cooperation with all to assist Iraq.
- The Ministerial Committee dealing with Iraq during the coming period should be invited to hold one or more meetings at the earliest opportunity to monitor developments in the situation in Iraq, with mandate to take the necessary measures.
- The Preparation and Follow-up Committee of the Conference on Iraqi National Accord, formed by the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Arab League, should be called upon to hold its first meeting at the beginning of the second week of April 2006 in order to prepare for the conference and determine the necessary procedures.
- Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail should continue his task as envoy of the Arab League and representative of the Secretary-General to achieve Iraqi national accord, charged with proceeding to Baghdad to monitor the measures for convening of the conference.
- The generous invitation from His Majesty Abdullah II bin Al Hussein to host a meeting of Iraqi religious authorities and figures in Amman, in coordination with the Arab League, should be welcomed. The Secretariat-General should be given a mandate to coordinate with the Jordanian and Iraqi authorities responsible for convening this conference as soon as possible.

- A scaled-down meeting should be organized as soon as possible, to be attended by the relevant political actors, in order to facilitate the task of preparing for the inclusive Conference on Iraqi National Accord. Political forces, coalitions and key parliamentary groups should be invited to the headquarters of the League, to any Arab State wishing to host this meeting or to Baghdad itself, for the purpose of achieving a convergence of views and affirming the path toward accord.
- A call should be addressed from this august summit to officials and politicians, religious authorities, tribal leaders and the entire fraternal Iraqi people to adhere to a temporary truce, ceasing all military action and acts of violence, in order to prepare for the Conference on Iraqi National Accord in an atmosphere of peace and security and to give it a chance to succeed.